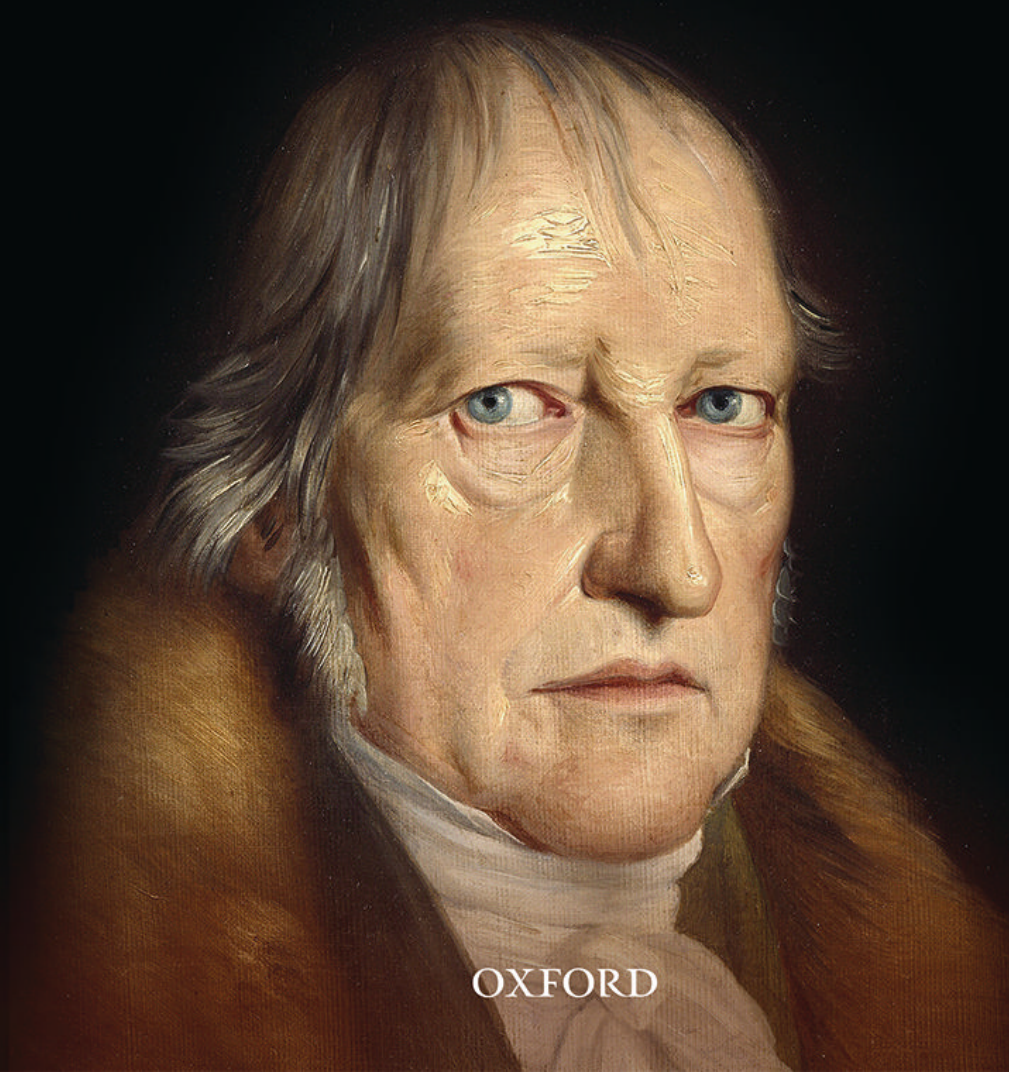
ROBERT R. WILLIAMS

HEGEL ON THE PROOFS AND THE PERSONHOOD OF GOD

STUDIES IN HEGEL'S LOGIC AND PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION



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Studies in Hegel's Logic and Philosophy of Religion

ROBERT R. WILLIAMS

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

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Great Clarendon Street, Oxford, OX2 6DP,
United Kingdom

Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford.
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First Edition published in 2017

Impression: 1

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Published in the United States of America by Oxford University Press
198 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016, United States of America

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
Data available

Library of Congress Control Number: 2016942738

ISBN 978–0–19–879522–3

Printed in Great Britain by
Clays Ltd, St Ives plc

Acknowledgments

I acknowledge with gratitude Edward Farley, who was my teacher when I was in college, and who subsequently became my semi-official "Doctor-Vater" in graduate school, and thereafter a lifelong friend and dialog partner. In addition to his own research and substantial publications, Farley introduced me to his colleague Peter C. Hodgson, who welcomed me to the Hegel Renaissance by generously sharing his work on Hegel with me, and introducing me to Walter Jaeschke at the Hegel-Archiv in Bochum Germany. My first exposure to Hegel's thought was a tutorial with Robert L. Horn, who had studied with Richard Kroner, on Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*. This enabled me to appreciate more fully John E. Smith's lectures at Columbia-Union on Hegel's Critique of Kant, which had decisive significance for me. These earlier exposures prepared me to grasp the importance of the 'new Hegel' presented in Ludwig Siep's *Anerkennung als Prinzip der praktische Philosophie* (1979), during a Fulbright year hosted by Klaus Hartmann in Tübingen, Germany. Reading and studying Hegel *auf Deutsch* was a transforming intellectual experience. My deepening interest in Hegel led me to the Hegel Society of North America for further conversations and explorations in Hegel's thought. I became familiar with the work of H. S. Harris and Errol Harris's work on Hegel's *Logic* and Whitehead's indebtedness to Hegel, Stephen Houlgate's work on tragedy in Hegel and Nietzsche, and on Hegel's *Logic*; John McCumber's work on Hegel and Language; Philip Grier's work on and translation of Iwan Iljin's *The Philosophy of Hegel as a Doctrine of the Concreteness of God and Humanity*, and Ardis Collins, the editor of the *Owl of Minerva*, whose book on *Hegel's Phenomenology* helped me to appreciate that Hegel's concept of 'withdrawal into ground' has profound implications for both the Logic of the concept and for religious praxis. I also wish to acknowledge my wife of nearly five decades, Irma Olmedo, whose encouragement, support, and sustaining love are for me the conditions of doing anything at all. This book is dedicated to these teachers, scholars, colleagues, and my life-partner. Their influence helped to make it a better one. Errors and lapses in execution of the project are mine.

I wish to acknowledge permission from Hackett Publishing Company to cite *G. W. F. Hegel: The Encyclopedia Logic* (1991), and from The University of Chicago Press to cite Stanley Rosen, *The Idea of Hegel's "Science of Logic"* (2013). I have generally relied upon two editions of Hegel's works: (1) the Suhrkamp edition (*Hegels Werke*: *Theorie Werkausgabe* (20 vols; Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1970–1)) for the books published by Hegel himself during

his lifetime (*Phenomenology of Spirit*, *Science of Logic*, *Philosophy of Right*, and *Encyclopedia* (1830), and (2) the modern historical-critical editions of his Berlin Lectures, i.e., *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, *Lectures on the Proofs for the Existence of God*, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit* 1827–8 (part III of the *Encyclopedia*), published in the *Gesammelte Werke*, ed. Academy of Sciences of North Rhineland-Westphalia in association with the Deutsche Forschungs-gemeinschaft (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1968 ff.). For Hegel's *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* and his Lectures on *Aesthetics*, I have made use of both the Suhrkamp edition and the *Gesammelte Werke* critical edition.

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Chicago, 2016

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Abbreviations

Works by Hegel

Aesthetics	*Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, trans. T. M. Knox (2 vols; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975)
BKH	*Between Kant and Hegel*, trans. H. S. Harris and G. di Giovanni (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1985)
BPhG	*G. W. F. Hegel: The Berlin Phenomenology*, ed. and trans. M. J. Petry (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1981)
Difference	*Difference between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy*, trans. W. Cerf and H. S. Harris (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1977)
E	*Encyclopedia Philosophy of Spirit, Werke*, vol. 8; English translation, *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind*, trans. W. Wallace and A. V. Miller, foreword by J. N. Findlay (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973)
EL	*Encyclopedia Logic*, trans. T. F. Geraets, W. A. Suchting, and H. S. Harris (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1991)
ETW	*Early Theological Writings*, trans. T. M. Knox (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1977)
FK	*Faith and Knowledge*, trans. W. Cerf and H. S. Harris (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1977)
LHP	*Lectures on the History of Philosophy* (1896), trans. E. S. Haldane and F. Simson (3 vols; New York: Humanities Press, 1906; repr. 1955, 1963); a translation of the second Michelet edition, 1840
LHP 1825–6	*Lectures on the History of Philosophy 1825–6*, vol. 1, *Introduction*, trans. R. F. Brown (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); vol. 2, *Greek Philosophy*, trans. R. F. Brown (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006)
LPR	*Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, ed. P. C. Hodgson, trans. R. F. Brown, P. C. Hodgson, and J. M. Stewart (3 vols; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005)
LProofs	*Lectures on the Proofs for the Existence of God*, trans. P. C. Hodgson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007)
MW	*Miscellaneous Writings of G. W. F. Hegel*, ed. Jon Stewart (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2002)
PhG	*Phänomenologie des Geistes*, ed. J. Hoffmeister (Hamburg: Meiner, 1952)
PhS	*Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977)
PR	*Philosophy of Right*, trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991)
SL	*Science of Logic*, trans. A. V. Miller (New York: Humanities Press, 1969)
VPK	*Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Kunst* (1823), ed. Annemarie Gethmann-Siefert (Hamburg: Meiner, 2003)
Werke	*Werke: Theorie Werkausgabe* (20 vols; Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1970–1)
WL	*WLWissenschaft der Logik*, in *Werke*, vols 5–6

Other Abbreviations

Commentary	Norman Kemp Smith, *A Commentary to Kant's Critique of Pure Reason* (London: Macmillan, 1918)
First Critique	Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (London: Macmillan, 1929)
HILH	Giacomo Rinaldi, *A History and Interpretation of the Logic of Hegel* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1992)
HSL	Stanley Rosen, *The Idea of Hegel's "Science of Logic"* (University of Chicago Press, 2013)
ILH	Errol E. Harris, *An Interpretation of the Logic of Hegel* (Lanham, MD: University Presses of America, 1983)
KL	Kindle Locations
LPJ	Tillich, *Love, Power and Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1954)
PG	Karl Ludwig Michelet, *Die Persönlichkeit Gottes und die Unsterblichkeit der Seele, oder die ewige Persönlichkeit des Geistes* (Berlin: Dummler Verlag, 1841)
RR	Walter Jaeschke, *Reason in Religion*, trans. Michael Stewart (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990)

Introduction: Hegel's Diagnosis of his Cultural Situation

1. THE DEATH OF GOD AND THE END OF PHILOSOPHY

Hegel's assessment of his philosophical–theological cultural situation continues to resonate today. Although Hegel does not use the term, his analysis of his situation identifies strong nihilistic tendencies. In Hegel's view, both philosophy and religion have become hollowed out, have lost or surrendered their substantial subject matters. Religion has surrendered its substantial content; only the empty husk of subjective conviction and feeling remains. Philosophy has likewise become hollowed out: reason has renounced its claim to substantial truth, becoming instead a moral faith. Hegel expressed the emptiness of both philosophy and religion in his day as the doctrine that we can know nothing of God. That God cannot be cognitively apprehended has become a universally acknowledged "truth," a settled issue, a kind of intellectual prejudice.[1] Moreover, "It is no longer a grief to our age that it knows nothing of God, rather it counts as the highest insight that this cognition is not even possible."[2] Consequently the human spirit is left only with appearances and feelings for its sustenance. This situation has been brought about from within: "Philosophical sciences, and ordinary commonsense thus cooperating to bring about the downfall of metaphysics, there is seen the strange spectacle of cultured people and nations without metaphysics—[Modern cultures are] like a temple richly ornamented in other respects but without any holy of holies."[3]

This does not necessarily mean that religion and religious practices have entirely disappeared from modernity. On the contrary. Hegel observes that the peculiar phenomenon of the cultural spirit of our time is that there are endless and perennial discussions about religion, its usefulness, historical and

[1] *LPR* 1. 86. [2] *LPR* 1. 87. [3] *SL* 25. See also n. 18.

social–psychological significance, and that these go hand in hand with trivial or even prohibited explications of God.[4] As a result, cultural "god-terms" such as truth, obligation, love, faithfulness, and so on have lost their substantiality. Hegel observes that there is no longer any identifiable meaning for the term "god" in philosophy or theology.[5] The understanding, separated from reason, has gone negative toward such content, and recognizes as true only what is empirically given and mathematically formalizable and quantifiable. This negation deprives philosophy and religion of their concern for and cognition of the whole. Deprived of their substantial content, religion retreats into feelings, and philosophy becomes philosophy of language or philosophical anthropology. Intellectual skepticism has overtaken religion (theology) and philosophy (metaphysical truth) to such an extent that Hegel asks: how could there still be any great controversy between faith and reason, when neither any longer possesses any objective content, or, in other words, neither any longer possesses anything about which there could be any dispute?[6] If there is nothing left to dispute, the result is nihilism. Although his response to nihilism differs drastically from Nietzsche, Hegel's cultural diagnosis of modernity parallels Nietzsche's, and both characterize the situation broadly as the death of God.

Stanley Rosen has made important studies of nihilism. His analysis of nihilism draws him to Hegel. He traces the conditions and origins of nihilism from Parmenides' Eleatic monism through Platonic and Kantian dualism to Hegel's dialectical critique of nihilism in his *Logic*.[7] His last book provides an important, substantial answer to the question "Why Hegel Today?" According to Rosen,

> there are three main problems, central to the history of Western philosophy, which Hegel claims to solve, and which he denies can be solved by traditional or nondialectical thinking. . . . These three problems can be restated as one general problem: how can we overcome the nihilism that is the consequence of Eleatic *monism* on the one hand, which leads to silence, and of Platonic–Aristotelian *dualism* on the other, which leads to the endless chatter of the history of philosophy? Hegel's logic is the fundamental step in his attempt to rescue us from estrangement and nihilism.[8]

Rosen claims that monism and dualism, pursued as opposing metaphysical theories, each leads to the subversion of philosophy and to nihilism. A third alternative is necessary:

[4] *LProofs*, 66. [5] *LPR* 1. 126.

[6] Hegel, "Foreword to Hinrichs Religionsphilosophie," repr. in *Miscellaneous Writings of G. W. F. Hegel*, ed. Jon Stewart (Northwestern University Press, 2002), 338.

[7] Rosen's second book, *Nihilism: A Philosophical Essay* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969), began a lifelong interest in the topic that was brought to fulfillment in his last book: *The Idea of Hegel's "Science of Logic"* (University of Chicago Press, 2013).

[8] *HSL* 10; *KL* 232–7; emphasis added.

> There are, in other words, three basic philosophical positions, monism, dualism, and trinitarianism. The monist asserts that everything is being, or alternatively that everything is thinking. The first version of monism is refuted by thinking; the second version is refuted by the . . . recalcitrance of beings. The dualist says that there is no explanation of the thinkability of things; this leads back to monism, usually to that form of monism according to which everything is thinking, with the added premise that thought is arbitrary or, as we say today, perspectival. In the case of both monism and dualism, the result is the same: the impossibility of philosophy.[9]

Two of the three basic philosophical positions are self-subverting, undermining the possibility of philosophy and leading to nihilism. For Rosen the third alternative is philosophical trinitarianism—that is, Hegel's *Logic*.

Hegel criticizes both monism and dualism. Specifically, he criticizes both Spinoza's monism for defrauding difference of its due,[10] and Kant's various dualisms (reason–sense, phenomena–noumena, finite–infinite, conditioned–unconditioned, and the antinomies) for absolutizing the difference and subordinating reason to sense. When difference is absolute, everything disintegrates into isolated fragments or atoms. To be sure, Kant claims that critical philosophy is a metaphysics of experience, a third alternative to empiricism and rationalism. However, he shares Hume's dogmatism about impressions (intuitions) and skepticism about reason, and about metaphysics as an impossible science of the Beyond (*Jenseits*). Hegel comments on

> how [modern skepticism] has kept in step with the . . . degeneration of philosophy . . . until finally in these most recent times it has sunk so far in company with dogmatism that for both of them the facts of consciousness have indubitable certainty . . . so that . . . dogmatism and skepticism coincide with one another . . . and offer each other the hand of perfect friendship and fraternity.[11]

Under these conditions philosophy cannot aim at the cognition of God but only at the cognition of humans.[12] When God becomes an unknowable beyond, theology is deprived of its object and shrivels up into feelings.[13] Worship decays into barrenness, a journey that does not arrive at its destination.[14] Moreover, even a doctrine recognized as divine cannot be the object of inquiry, but only the facts and circumstances surrounding it. The doctrine itself remains outside the interest of intellectual inquiry and activity, and, because its content is assumed to be unattainable, it is pointless to make it a matter of inquiry.[15] The nihilistic implications of Hegel's analysis of modernity are clear from his rhetorical question "What is a theology without a

[9] *HSL* 392–3; *KL* 7805. Cf. n. 24. [10] *EL* §151Z.
[11] Hegel, "On the Relationship of Skepticism to Philosophy," in *BKH* 330.
[12] *FK* 66. [13] *LPR* 1. 103, 191. [14] *LPR* 1. 103, 191.
[15] Hegel, "Hinrichs Religionsphilosophie," in *MW* 345–6.

knowledge of God? Precisely what a philosophy is without that knowledge, sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal!"[16]

Rosen appropriates Hegel's description of his cultural situation, claiming that it still applies to modernity and postmodernity's "chatter." He appropriates Hegel's account of modern Hume-inspired skepticism as a skepticism about reason coupled with a dogmatic certitude about sense impressions. This leads to a dogmatism of the sciences of experience, together with those of mathematics or analytical formalism. The combination of doubt about reason (except its mathematical or formal use) and unquestioning acceptance of impressions, leads to a division between thought and being—that is, dualism. According to Rosen,

> Since mathematics is nondialectical formalism, it has no internal principle of development through contradiction and serves not merely to structure experience but to mark the boundary between the rational and the nonrational. *It is the enforcer of dualism*. And the world of science is a dogmatic construction that is *lacking in human significance because it is devoid of spirit*.[17]

Rosen even borrows Hegel's metaphor to portray the spiritual poverty of the modern alliance between mathematical formalism and the sciences of experience as resembling "an otherwise completely ornamented temple without a holy of holies."[18]

Mathematical formalism does not repeal or abolish metaphysics; Hegel characterizes it as metaphysical atomism.[19] Rosen recalls the negative influence of Hegel in the development of early analytical philosophy, which led to Russell's and the early Wittgenstein's doctrine of logical atomism. But the more recent turn to ordinary language philosophy implies a reassessment of logical atomism, and opens a door to a possible renewal of interest in Hegel: "If the analytical philosophers were correct to repudiate logical atoms, does this not force them to fall back upon a kind of Hegelian dialectical ontology?"[20] Rosen explains one reason for a renewal of interest in Hegel:

> It is Hegel's contention that the impossibility of explaining a primitive formal element by itself, without making use of the others, or in other words of the initial interconnectedness of these elements with respect to human cognition, is due to an *ontological interconnectedness such that the elements not only are not individually conceivable but do not exist independently of each other*. The heart of the matter for Hegel is that what Plato claims to be independent and stable properties are in fact dialectically excited moments of a complex process that is continuously

[16] Hegel, "Hinrichs Religionsphilosophie," in *MW* 352.
[17] *HSL* 25; *KL* 536–8; emphasis added.
[18] *HSL* 30; *KL* 603. See *SL* 25. Rosen claims this passage "could easily have been written to describe our own time."
[19] *EL* §§98–9. [20] *HSL* 2; *KL* 73–7.

> transforming one property into the other. If the elements were static and independent, the coherence and life of the world would be unintelligible.[21]

The interconnectedness of cognitive categories and elements is due to an ontological interconnectedness. Not only are the elements not individually conceivable; they do not exist independently of each other. No one has ever explained identity except via difference or difference except via identity.[22] Rosen explains that "identity cannot be thought apart from difference, not because our thinking is defective . . . but because identity is not, precisely as in and for itself, separate from difference."[23]

This ontological interconnectedness is established by negation—that is, the *Aufhebung*. According to Hegel, negation is a process that distinguishes, relates, and preserves the distinguished/related elements on a higher level—that is, in concrescence, an articulated totality. This yields Rosen's brief but important summary of Hegel's fundamental position:

> We can therefore say that the world, or actuality, is neither subject nor object, that is, neither merely subjective nor objective, but both, and both *as identical in their difference*. This initially obscure phrase means that subject and object both obey the same rules of dialectical self-excitation, and that this dialectical self-excitation is the negative activity of the absolute. This, stated as succinctly as possible, is what Hegel means by absolute spirit. No interpretation of Hegel can succeed without acknowledging the fundamental status of this conception of the absolute. One is free to reject Hegel, but in order to do so in a philosophically responsible manner, rather than as an expression of one's own ineptitude, it is necessary to explain the thinkability of things. There are, in other words, three basic philosophical positions, monism, dualism, and trinitarianism.[24]

Note that, for Rosen, trinitarianism is a philosophical doctrine that is an alternative to the abstract *identity*/unity of monism, and to the abstract particularity (*Besonderheit*) or *difference* of dualism/atomism.[25] Put simply, trinitarianism is a doctrine of an identity of identity and difference, which many, including Rosen, abbreviate as a "unity-in-difference." However, while this phrase is not incorrect, it fails to give the difference its due in Hegel's trinitarianism. I prefer a slight modification—namely, "unity in and through difference," to make clearer that the unity/identity is not abstract but determinate, because it is mediated through difference.[26] According to Rosen, "the central motive of Hegel's entire teaching is to overcome dualism, that is, to establish 'trinitarianism' or the identity within difference of monism and dualism."[27]

[21] *HSL* 17; *KL* 361–7.
[22] *HSL* 290; *KL* 5856.
[23] *HSL* 399; *KL* 7947–9.
[24] *HSL* 392–3; *KL* 7805–11; cf. n. 9.
[25] Hegel observes that "the ancients did not know what they really possessed in these forms, namely that they contained the absolute consciousness of truth" (*LPR* 3. 81).
[26] Rosen makes this point (see n. 23). This issue is pursued in Ch. 3 and Ch. 5, Sects 3 ff.
[27] *HSL* 374; *KL* 7454–6.

Again Rosen is fundamentally correct, but the point is that, for Hegel, overcoming dualism does not suppress or eliminate the difference but preserves it in unity with identity, which is no longer abstract but a determinate—that is, trinitarian *totality*.

Rosen thinks that there is a lot riding on this trinitarianism. Recall his claim that both monism and dualism achieve the same negative result—namely, the separation of thought and being that means that "things fall apart." This makes philosophy impossible. The self-subversion of philosophy and religion in unreconciled dualism or universal disintegration, generates chaos—that is, nihilism. But chaos and nihilism, while currently fashionable in some quarters, are not sustainable as plausible philosophical doctrines, as Rosen explains:

> The thesis of essential chaos grants that chaos is the essence of appearance. It is therefore already on the way toward overcoming the split between essence and appearance. What has to be shown is that the inner excitation of chaos is precisely the formation process by which appearances appear. And this can be done as soon as we begin to speak: to speak is already to contradict the claim that life is sheer chaos. . . . the assertion of nihilism is grounded in a structure of meaning that is the object or content of comprehensive negation. And negation is itself unintelligible except in conjunction with affirmation. That is, negative discourse is a modality of affirmative discourse; the two taken together exhibit the dialectical interrelationship between position and negation, or, in the abstract categorial language of book 1 of the SL, of being and nothing.[28]

Rosen interprets nihilism as a stage in Hegel's dialectic—namely, the negation of an initial position (for example, the negation of monism by dualism, identity by difference). This results in a temporary or relative nihilism that poses a contradiction or contradictory dualism. This opposition/dualism is overcome by a negation of the opposition that reconciles the opposites as moments within a larger, articulated whole. Rosen is interested in Hegel because he thinks that Hegel's dialectic sublates and overcomes nihilism. Trinitarianism for Rosen names the unity in and through difference, the affirmative result of dialectic in an articulated, dynamic whole that sublates dualism, sheer chaos, and nihilism.

Rosen wrote his last book on Hegel because in Hegel's thought he found resources for dealing with fundamental problems of reason, philosophy, and religion, similar to, if not the same as, fundamental problems that Hegel himself addressed, as already noted. Rosen's book is an attempt not to justify every aspect of Hegel's doctrine, but to think about similar issues with Hegel's assistance. While Hegel's philosophy is notoriously difficult, there is much to be learned from it—namely, the crucial importance of philosophical trinitarianism or unity in difference. Rosen provocatively asserts:

[28] *HSL* 224; *KL* 4528–35.

> It would therefore be quite reasonable to maintain, not only that Hegel is the only philosopher, but that his central thesis is self-evident. . . . In my opinion, it is far from easy to refute Hegel's contention that substance is subject, or for that matter what seems to be the still more extreme thesis of the absolute spirit. This doctrine seems preposterous to the post-Hegelian skeptical temperament, but that is a sign of the progressive deterioration of the philosophical impetus, not of the absurdity of Hegel's doctrines. We have today fallen almost entirely into one version or another of subjective idealism; even the so-called realists hold to some version or another of neo-Kantian definitions of reality. But none of these meets the Hegelian challenge, since all of them fail to explain how being is accessible to thought while at the same time retaining its independence or recalcitrance to thinking.[29]

Since he believes that philosophy and theology have not only been called into question, but are tending toward terminal ossification, Hegel begins his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* with the following remark concerning his intention: "I wanted to make this cognitive knowledge of God and religion the object of my lectures because . . . I believe it has never been so important and so necessary that this cognition should be taken seriously once more."[30] If modern philosophical culture splinters and fragments the highest truth of both philosophy and theology, Hegel adheres to the unity of reason and truth:

> there cannot be two kinds of reason and two kinds of spirit, a divine and a human reason, or a divine spirit and a human spirit that would be strictly distinct from one another as if their essence were strictly opposed. Human reason, human spiritual consciousness or consciousness of its own essence, is reason generally, is the divine within humanity. Spirit, insofar as it is called divine spirit, is not a spirit beyond the stars or beyond the world; for God is present . . . and strictly *as spirit* God is present in spirit. God is a living God who is effective, active and present in spirit. Religion is a begetting of the divine spirit, not an invention of human beings, but an effect of the divine at work, of the divine productive process within humanity.[31]

The identity of content shared by religion and philosophy is shared in a diversity of form: representation and concept respectively. Philosophy does not create the content of religion but receives it from religious representation. While religious representation may contain truth, it is philosophy that puts that truth in the form of truth, to wit, the concept.[32] Where the religious representation does not agree with the conceptual form, it must be elevated as far as possible to the conceptual level.[33]

[29] *HSL* 393; *KL* 7816–30. [30] *LPR* 1. 86. [31] *LPR* 1. 130.

[32] While Hegel sometimes asserts that philosophy produces the truth, he also qualifies this by affirming that the truth produced by the philosophical concept is at the same time *recognized* as *not produced*, and, as the truth, it subsists in and for itself (*LPR* 3. 345). Recognition is not immediate certainty, but arises out of the destruction of immediate certainty. Cf. *LPR* 1. 249–50.

[33] *RR* 286–90.

Hegel's project is "to regain such a fullness by means of the concept."[34] The fullness is both philosophical and theological. As Dieter Henrich has pointed out, Hegel's project includes a renewal of ontotheology that transforms and exceeds all prior versions.[35]

2. HEGEL'S RESPONSE TO NIHILISM: PHILOSOPHICAL AND THEOLOGICAL TRINITARIANISM

The project of combining inquiry into Hegel's ontotheology, his recasting of the traditional theological proofs, and his concept of the personhood of God grew out of an earlier work in which I began an investigation of Hegel's final, incomplete, yet important book project, *Lectures on the Proofs for God*.[36] This virtually unknown work manifests Hegel's lifelong interest in philosophical theology, logic, and metaphysics.

The present book consists of two parts. The first part, *Hegel on the Proofs of God*, treats Hegel's critique of Kant and renewal of ontotheology in the shape of *philosophical trinitarianism*—namely the unity in and through difference of concept and objectivity (absolute idea). Its principal focus is on Hegel's discussion of the theological proofs in light of Kant's attack, and his response to Kant, especially in his *Logic*, *Philosophy of Religion*, and the *Lectures on the Proofs*. Chapter 1 treats Kant's attack on the proofs, focusing principally on the Transcendental Dialectic portion of the *First Critique.* Kant claims that the cosmological and teleological proofs follow a spontaneous natural logic whereby we are led from observations of the world, its order, and so on, to infer the existence of a cause and designer. But, while Kant asserts such natural logic always has been and always will be followed by reason and thus seems to be plausible and inevitable, he dismisses and rejects the natural logic as sophistic. Given the empirical premisses in these proofs, the most that they can show is a relative absolute, but not the absolutely necessary. To demonstrate the latter they fall back on the ontological proof, which Kant dismisses as a merely scholastic innovation because it inverts the natural logical order by beginning with the concept of God, and because it attempts to "pluck" existence out of an arbitrarily constructed concept. But, since concepts without intuitions are merely empty forms of thought—that is, only subjective concepts—and since existence as intuited is other than thought, the ontological proof fails.

[34] *LPR* 1. 128.
[35] Dieter Henrich, *Der ontologische Gottesbeweise* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1960).
[36] *LProofs*. My *Tragedy, Recognition and the Death of God: Studies in Hegel and Nietzsche* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), also discusses Hegel's *Lectures on the Proofs*.

Thus special metaphysics and rational theology are discredited, at least in general opinion.

Hegel discovered that, when he regarded Kant's thought at close range, Kant's thought was pervaded by ambiguity, which he calls the "perpetual oscillation in Kant's philosophy"—namely:

> Kant exhibited the extremes of opposition in their one-sidedness, and also expressed the reconciliation of the contradiction; reason posits unity.... Kant however says that this [unity] is only a mode of our reflecting judgment; life itself is not so.[37]

On the one hand, Kant claims that what is true is the isolation, separation, and irreducible opposition between things (his skeptical view of reason shared with Hume), and, on the other, a few moments later he declares that what is true is not the abstract separation and isolation, but rather the unity of things formerly asserted to be isolated, separated, and opposed (his idealistic view of reason).[38]

There is a reason for this "oscillation" in the transcendental dialectic of the *First Critique*. In this section Kant oscillates between a skeptical view of reason that takes it to be merely the understanding in illegitimate transcendent employment, and an idealist view that takes reason to be independent of the understanding, which reflects Kant's deep-rooted belief in the autonomy and ultimate validity of pure thought. Hegel's identification of Kant's oscillation receives scholarly support from Norman Kemp Smith, who, in his classic *Commentary to Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, explores what he terms Kant's "wavering" between an idealist view and a skeptical view of reason in transcendental dialectic.[39]

Chapter 2 treats Hegel's recasting of the proofs as the elevation of spirit to God. I challenge the conventional view that Hegel simply concedes to Kant that the proofs all fail as proofs, and that the elevation of spirit to God is a purely subjective recasting consistent with a philosophy/theology of feeling. No one bothers to ask, if the proofs all fail, and are debris left over from the collapse of metaphysics, why Hegel bothered to recast them. Hegel's view is more subtle and nuanced: "we are mistaken when we suppose that, because their form is attacked, the proofs of God's existence have become antiquated with respect to their content. But the content is, of course, not presented in its purity."[40] Hegel holds that the proofs fail owing to defects in the rational form that they received in classical logic and metaphysics. But the proofs themselves possess a rational content—that is, the spontaneous natural logic that Kant identified but misunderstood and misinterpreted. Hegel's project is to restore them to their proper significance as the elevation of spirit to God. Hegel's

[37] *LHP* 3. 472. [38] *EL* §60. [39] *Commentary*, 560. [40] *LPR* 1. 420 n. 122.

project is more than a merely subjective doctrine of religion; it is a philosophical theology.

Further, while Kant speaks of the fact of reason, Hegel speaks of the fact of religion. The fact of reason is immediate; but the elevation of spirit is a mediation—namely, the reciprocal mediation of divine spirit and human spirit. This mediation possesses its own immanent necessity and logic. The portrayal of this necessity is what invites the attempts at proof, and it is the task of the *Science of Logic* to interpret and reformulate this inner necessity immanent in the fact of religion itself. The elevation of spirit to God is for Hegel a necessary, categorically ordered progression toward "the consummate manifestation of the concept. . . . Logic is to this extent metaphysical theology."[41]

Chapter 3 takes up Hegel's discussion of the ontological proof in the more historical discussions in his lectures, and Hegel's defense of the ontological proof in his *Logic*, which focuses on the doctrine of the concept, the transition from subjective concept to objectivity, and which culminates in the absolute idea, the dialectical unity in difference of concept and objectivity. Hegel's reconstruction of the ontological proof in terms of the *concept* will introduce important aspects of Hegel's technical Logic of the Concept, which takes up the entire third book of the *Science of Logic*. The concept is essential to and the foundation of Hegel's *philosophical trinitarianism*, in terms of which Hegel formulates the concept of spirit, and reconstructs traditional theological trinitarianism. For example, Hegel notes that the concept has three moments: universality, particularity (*Besonderheit*), and singularity (*Einzelheit*). But there are not three concepts here, and to presuppose and/or impose quantitative numerical considerations is a mistake because it fragments and atomizes the concept. The moments of the concept are irreducible and inseparable; each can be grasped and understood only on the basis of and together with the others. The concept is not inert, but a living organic whole or totality. All of this is important because we shall discover that the dispute between Hegel and Kant over the ontological proof is in part a dispute over what a concept is.

Further, Kant and Gaunilo both object that existence is other than the concept, and Kant asserts that existence cannot be "plucked" from an empty, merely formal concept. Hegel agrees with Kant, but rejects Kant's objection as fatal to the proof. In Hegel's view, the proof requires that the *opposite* of the concept—objectivity—should nevertheless proceed from the concept as a negation of negation. For Hegel, concept and existence are both irreducibly different and dialectically inseparable. This means that Hegel's concept is a dialectical unity in and through difference. Rightly understood, the concept is a logical movement obeying its immanent logic, and as such it is its own ontological proof.

[41] *LProofs*, 99; cf. 104.

The transition from subjective concept to objectivity constitutes Hegel's reconstruction of the ontological proof in the *Logic*. This transition suspends the subjective concept that is opposed to objectivity, and objectivity becomes the self-objectification and self-realization of the concept. The absolute idea is the ontotheological expression of Hegel's philosophical trinitarianism. This is not simply ontotheology, because the categorical development does not stop with being or even actuality, but develops further into Hegel's doctrine of the concept, including its universal singularity or social personhood.

Part Two focuses on Hegel's concepts of personhood, community, and "The Personhood of God." It focuses on Hegel's concept of person and personhood (*Persönlichkeit*), the relation of personhood to recognition and spirit, and culminates in Hegel's *theological trinitarianism*—that is, doctrine of triune absolute spirit. Chapter 4 begins with an investigation of Hegel's concept of person in the *Philosophy of Right*, its logical foundation in his doctrine of the concept, and its relation to the concept of recognition. The chapter includes a discussion of Karl Ludwig Michelet's essay on the personhood of God, about which I shall say more shortly. Chapter 5 is devoted to an examination of the concept of personhood in the *Logic*, including the beginnings of the subject in Hegel's treatment of determinate being (*Dasein*). As the first negation of negation in the *Logic*, the "something" (*Etwas*) is the beginning, but only the beginning of the subject. The dialectical analysis of something and other initiates the sublation and expansion of the subject into totality and community, which achieves full intensity in the absolute idea, which is the true infinite. The chapter concludes with the elusive personhood of the absolute idea, which is not a subject or a person, but rather the categorical–logical basis of such, constituting a range of possibilities from being-for-one only (that is, withdrawal into self, evil), to being-for-self in relation to others—for example, friendship, marriage, social communities, and institutions, and God as spirit.

The concept of personhood in Hegel's philosophical theology of absolute spirit is treated in Chapter 6. Here the focus is on differentiating triune absolute spirit from the absolute idea of the *Logic*, and the transition from *Logic* to *Realphilosophie*, the singularity (*Einzelheit*) of the concept and its qualification by categories of spirit (recognition) and of theology (incarnation, trinity, and reconciliation). In other words, Chapter 6 examines Hegel's *theological trinitarianism*.

Running throughout the discussion in Part One are questions concerning Hegel's response to Kant, and his overcoming of the Kantian critique from which the attack on the proofs was carried out. One of the issues is metaphysics. Following Hegel, I distinguish between (1) pre-critical metaphysics (the First Attitude of Thought towards Objectivity)[42]; and (2) Hegel's critique of

[42] See *EL* §§26–39.

metaphysics, which acknowledges that Kant put an end to dogmatic metaphysics. However, Hegel criticizes Kant for taking over and retaining pre-critical finite categories. Kant thus fails to achieve a genuine critique, but rather transforms the pre-critical dogmatism of objective metaphysics into a subjective "critical dogmatism."[43] (3) I claim that Hegel's concept of the true infinite—which he distinguishes from the spurious infinite or the abstract beyond (*Jenseits*), and which is not opposed to the finite but rather contains the finite sublated in itself[44]—approximates panentheism—a concept associated with Whitehead and Hartshorne.[45] Hegel's panentheistic true infinite is a post-critical metaphysics, a doctrine of dynamic, articulated totality, a philosophy of organism as social infinity.

What ties the two parts of this project together—the *philosophical* trinitarianism of Part One and the *theological* trinitarianism of Part Two—is Hegel's *doctrine of the concept*, which comprises the third book of the *Science of Logic*. This includes Hegel's anti-formalist corrective of the abstract universal and abstract particular[46] of traditional logic. The doctrine of the concept is the logical foundation of Hegel's reconstruction of the ontological proof in Part One, and the doctrine of recognitive personhood investigated in Part Two. Each part examines different aspects of the concept. Part One focuses on the concept as the unity in difference of thought and being—that is, the *Logic* as an extended ontological proof. While every concept is on the ontological level, —that is, a determinate unity of thought and being—the *necessary inseparability* of concept and being is the distinctive feature of the concept of God.[47] Part Two focuses on Hegel's doctrine of the true infinite. It builds on the concept as organic totality whose immanent distinctions are both irreducible and inseparable, and whose inner purposiveness and drive toward self-actualization receives speculative interpretation and treatment in the doctrine that substance becomes not merely

[43] *LHP* 3. 427; for Hegel's disagreement with Kant, cf. Ch. 1, Sects 3–4.

[44] *EL* §45Z.

[45] Cf. Errol E. Harris, "The Contemporary Significance of Hegel and Whitehead," in George Lucas Jr (ed.), *Hegel and Whitehead: Contemporary Perspectives on Systematic Philosophy* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1986). See Charles Hartshorne, *Man's Vision of God* (New York: Harper & Row, 1941), *The Divine Relativity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948), and *The Logic of Perfection* (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1962, 1973) (part of his sustained defense of the ontological proof that convinced John N. Findlay to change his position.).

[46] See *EL* §§160–5 for a brief overview of this vast topic. Hegel regards the concept of the understanding as an empty form of thinking that depends on content *given* to it. To trace any content back to such an empty form would only rob the content of its determinacy instead of securing the cognition of it (§160Z) The concept as Hegel develops it is the principle of all life and is not formal but utterly concrete (§163). Hegel's concept of the concept is set forth in his doctrine of the concept, which occupies Book Three of the *Science of Logic*.

[47] "God has to be explicitly that which can only be thought *as existing*, where the concept includes being in itself. It is this unity of concept and being that constitutes the concept of God" (*EL* §51R). Cf. *LPR* 3. 181.

subject, but spirit—that is, community. God is not only absolute necessity, but also absolute personhood.[48] This is packed into the singularity (*Einzelheit*) of the concept.[49] The singularity of the concept receives further specification in Hegel's *Realphilosophie*—the distinction between immediate and universal singularity—and above all in the concept of absolute spirit that is constituted by the reversal of the death of God that puts death itself to death.

Hegel's concept of divine personhood is neither simply another word for "anthropology," nor a claim about a transcendent, otherworldly cosmic monarch. Hegel rejects these as well as the abstract "highest being" of traditional substance metaphysics—abstract transcendence and abstract universal as *Jenseits*. Such indeterminate terms are, in Hegel's view, inert abstractions, and not a living, self-determining God as spirit. Hegel affirms with Plato and Aristotle that God is not jealous but rather self-communicating.[50] Hegel claims that at the heart of religion there is a *relationship* of spirit to spirit.[51] Religion is a relationship that issues subjectively from the human spirit and objectively from God as spirit. Neither side of this relationship is reducible to the other. Their unity in and through difference is a community. The concept of God is spirit in his community.[52] Religion is not reducible to morality or merely a support for morality. Kant fails to understand that God cannot plausibly be reduced to a postulate, something that ought to be; the "ought to be" is a spurious infinite.[53]

God is self-communicating, and loses nothing by communicating. Self-communication is purposive activity. The purposive activity of God can have only God godself as its purpose. On behalf of this purpose, God "demands recognition and veneration as God."[54] These assertions and claims presuppose and reflect divine personhood. Hegel writes: "One may define belief in God any way one pleases, but if God lacks personhood [*Persönlichkeit*], the definition is inadequate."[55] A concept of God that lacks personhood is an abstraction that falls short of determinacy (*Einzelheit*), relation,

[48] *EL* §151Z.

[49] *EL* §§160–5. Hegel observes that universality, particularity, and singularity correspond to identity, difference, and ground. Singularity suspends the opposition between abstract universal and abstract particular—i.e., a unity in difference, a determinate universality.

[50] See *LProofs*, 65–7. Hegel challenges skepticism and the tragic theology. He asks: "Why should God not communicate godself?", and defends this doctrine without appealing to the Christian religious tradition. To be sure, the Christian doctrines of incarnation and trinity are also important for Hegel in the *LPR*.

[51] *LPR* 1. 383; Cf. *E.* §554. [52] *E.* §554.

[53] "Unhappy the age that must content itself with being forever told only that there may be a God!" (*LPR* 1. 444 n., 175; cf. *E.* §552).

[54] *LPR* 2. 434–5. This assertion is made in Hegel's discussion of Jewish religion.

[55] Note to §35 of the *Philosophy of Right*, in *Werke*, vol. 7.

and actuality.[56] Both the revised ontological proof and divine personhood are necessary to Hegel's project of overcoming skepticism and nihilism.

3. THE PERSONHOOD OF GOD AND THE BREAK-UP OF THE HEGELIAN SCHOOL

The issue of divine personhood divided the Hegelian school into factions that could not agree on a single unified interpretation of his thought. One group was the right-wing Hegelians, who believed that Hegel's theology of divine personhood was both necessary and compatible with the transcendent God of traditional theism—an otherworldly person, cosmic monarch, and so on. An opposing group, the left-wing Hegelians, rejected the former abstract transcendent divine being of traditional theism as incompatible with the Hegelian system. This group read theology out of Hegel's system. They insisted that the logic was a treatise about method, and that divine personhood was merely metaphorical, leaving the issue of the personhood of the absolute idea in the *Logic* suspended somewhere between empty metaphor and anthropology. According to Walter Jaeschke, both right- and left-Hegelian views are interpretive failures. Neither position corresponds to Hegel's *Philosophy of Religion*, which seeks to retrieve and develop the authentic content of both philosophy and religion out of the concept.[57] I agree with Walter Jaeschke's assessment, and with his further claim that the most plausible reading of Hegel's system, including the existence and the personhood of God, is presented by center-middle Hegelians, whose literature is all but unknown and unrepresented in current discussions of Hegel.

Jaeschke points out that, since Hegel's method is grounded in the concept, it cannot simply be a restatement of or simply measured by traditional Christian orthodoxy; rather, orthodoxy has to be raised to the level of the concept, which is a post-Kantian critical objective idealism.[58] Further, both right-Hegelians and left-Hegelians fail to offer plausible interpretations of what Hegel calls "the basic concept of philosophy, the true infinite."[59] Every attempt to separate the infinite from and oppose it to the finite makes the infinite a leveled or finite–infinite (*die schlechte Unendlickeit*). The true infinite includes the finite as an ideal moment. It is one of few categories in the *Logic* that is present and

[56] The concrete universality of the concept—its *Einzelheit*—is the locus of the personhood of the concept in the *Logic* and is qualified as the triune divine personhood in the *Philosophy of Religion.*

[57] *RR* 352, 374–5. [58] *RR* 290.

[59] *EL* §95R. For a discussion of the true infinite, cf. Robert Williams, "Hegel's Concept of the True Infinite," *Owl of Minerva*, 42/1–2 (2010–11), 89–122, 137–52; Williams, *Tragedy, Recognition and the Death of God*, ch. 6.

developed in the *Philosophy of Religion*. It is the result of Hegel's critique of abstract universals, abstract transcendence, the abstract cosmic monarch, and the dualism of traditional theist metaphysics.[60] I agree with Jaeschke and with Giacomo Rinaldi, that the left-wing–right-wing positions do not exhaust the interpretive possibilities, and that one of the most important representatives of a third, center Hegelian position is K. L. Michelet.[61]

Michelet's center Hegelian position expressed in his early essay on the *Personhood of God* (1841) is among the most relevant for understanding Hegel's views on the personhood of God. Michelet is clear that "personhood" does not mean that God is a finite person. However, this negation does not dispose of the matter. A culture like ours, which extends personhood to such diverse entities as zygotes and commercial corporations and even attributes religion to the latter (!), should not have great difficulty in entertaining Hegel's extended use of personhood to institutions such as marriage and family as, for example, corporate persons. However, Michelet was never able to decide what extended sense the personhood of God consisted in, partly because his discussion of personhood appeared to be confined to the categories of Being in book one of Hegel's *Logic*. His reading of God as the universal subject in all finite subjects seems pantheistic. I have corrected Michelet by identifying the logical origin of the concept of the subject in the dialectic of "something and other," which Hegel sublates in his doctrine of the Singularity (*Einzelheit*) of the concept (Ch. 5, Sect. 3). This holistic reading of the singularity of the concept forms the bridge between Hegel's philosophical trinitarianism of the *Logic*, and his theological trinitarianism of triune absolute spirit in the *Philosophy of Religion* (Ch. 6, Sect. 1). Moreover, Michelet did not sufficiently appreciate the significance of Hegel's doctrine of the concept in his account of personhood, or the importance of the concept of recognition for the philosophy of spirit and for divine–human unity in difference in Hegel's *Philosophy of Religion*—that is, God must be apprehended as spirit in his community.[62]

One difficulty in grasping divine personhood is the necessity of overcoming the abstraction, the formalism, the empty vacuum of the highest being of substance metaphysics—abstract transcendence and abstract universal as *Jenseits*. Such a wholly indeterminate conception is in Hegel's view not a living, self-mediating determinate God as spirit. It is well known that Hegel asserts that substance is equally subject. Just as freedom is the truth of necessity, so also subjectivity is the truth of substance. However, although the sublation/transformation of substance into subject is a step beyond

[60] It should also be noted that there is no orthodox definition, much less doctrine, of the concept of transcendence. Hegel criticizes traditional theology and classical metaphysics as abstract transcendence and spurious infinity.

[61] *PG*. See also Karl Ludwig Michelet, *Das System der Philosophie als exacter Wissenschaft* (Berlin: Nicolai, 1876–81).

[62] *E*. §554; *LProofs*, 126.

abstract indeterminacy, subjectivity itself is still abstract. As we shall see, the subject is pre-recognitive, and not yet person, and subjectivity is not yet personhood, but only the possibility of personhood. And personhood is only the possibility of spirit.

Second, neither Hegel's philosophy nor his speculative philosophy of religion can be reduced to traditional views of metaphysics or theology, nor to contemporary non-metaphysical interpretations of Hegel.[63] Hegel's *Logic* is metaphysics, but it is not the pre-critical metaphysics that he criticizes. It is a post-critical trinitarian metaphysics of identity as unity in and through difference, a social philosophy of organism. It is post-critical—that is, it overcomes Kant's separation of the examination of the categories from their actual cognitive employment. Kant's way of critique leads to formalism, dualism, to the subordination of reason to the understanding and sense,[64] and hence to the paralysis of reason.[65] In Hegel's view, since the inquiry into cognition is itself cognition, the limits of cognition cannot be determined otherwise than cognitively. Hegel's view of rational critique is that "the activity of the forms of thinking, and the critique of them, must be united within the process of cognition."[66] In other words:

> To learn to swim one must go into the water. One cannot make cognition into one's object without thereby behaving cognitively at the same time. . . . When we philosophize about religion, we are in fact investigating reason . . . only we do so without the supposition that we will get this over first apart from our real object. Instead the cognition of reason is exactly the object, is what it is all about. . . . the relationship of finite spirit or reason to infinite spirit or reason, is engendered within religion itself and must be dealt with there.[67]

It is important to keep in mind that Hegel is not simply restating historical Christian theology, but reconstructing it from the concept. The concept is the underlying basis, not only of Hegel's reconstruction of the ontological proof in the *Logic*, but also of Hegel's concepts of personhood (singularity), community and social infinity (universal singularity), and self-determining, self-communicating, self-realizing triune Absolute Spirit. Hegel's doctrine of the concept informs his philosophical trinitarianism in his reconstruction and defense of the ontological proof, his concept of personhood in community in his *Philosophy of Spirit*, and his theological trinitarianism in his *Philosophy of Religion*.

[63] Cf. Ch. 1, Sect. 2, esp. nn. 17, 18, 19. See also Williams, *Tragedy, Recognition and the Death of God*, intro., sect. III.

[64] *SL* 588–95. [65] "Fragment on Cosmological Proof," *LProofs*, 163.

[66] *EL* §41Z.

[67] *LPR* 2. 139. One of the elements engendered in the relation of absolute spirit and human spirit constitutive of religion is a divine demand for recognition as God. See Ch. 6.

Both his philosophical trinitarianism and his theological trinitarianism are conditions of Hegel's concept of freedom as universal ethical life that incorporates both the social and the individual. Hegel rejects the purely formal, content-free, negative freedom manifest in the Terror of the French Revolution.[68] He also rejects the flight from universality evident in naturalistic misconstructions of freedom in atomistic individualism, ethnocentric nationalism, and tribalism.[69] In Hegel's view, freedom means being at home with oneself in an other; this is a social concept of universal freedom that recognizes the human being as such is ineligible for slavery and domination.[70] For "The principle of personhood is universality, but the master considers the slave not as a person, but as a thing devoid of selfhood and freedom, and the slave himself does not count as an 'I,' for his master is his 'I' instead."[71] We will see that Hegel's view of freedom requires a concept of God superior to the impersonal concept afforded by substance metaphysics, namely "a concept that must . . . be further grasped as *spirit* with the deeper quality of *freedom*, in order that it should be a concept of God that is worthy of God and also [worthy] of us."[72]

[68] *PR* §5+Z: "all institutions are incompatible with the abstract self-consciousness of equality."

[69] *LProofs*, 117: Hegel criticizes the reductive view of abstract individuality "to which modern times has so attached itself. . . . The contingent is in this way retained on its own account, separated from the absolutely necessary." Hegel also observes that the traditional Christian concept of freedom and individuality has misled the understanding into conceiving individuals as isolated, subsisting atoms (*LProofs*, 137).

[70] *PR* §57: "that the content of right should no longer be apprehended merely in its subjective concept, and consequently that the ineligibility of the human being in and for himself for slavery should no longer be apprehended *merely* as something that *ought* to be, is an insight which comes only when we recognize that the idea of freedom is truly present only in the state."

[71] *EL* §163 Z1.

[72] *LProofs*, 81.

Part One

Hegel on the Proofs of God

1

Kant's Attack on and Hegel's Renewal of Ontotheology

1. INTRODUCTION

Hegel begins his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* with an observation on the bleak if not hostile cultural situation that his lectures address: "It is no longer a grief to our age that it knows nothing of God; rather it counts as the highest [philosophical] insight that this cognition is not even possible. . . . For the doctrine that we can know nothing of God . . . has become in our time a universally acknowledged truth, a settled matter, a kind of prejudice."[1] Consequently if anyone does venture to inquire into God's existence and nature, he can "expect that no one will pay any attention at all, that such a thought is regarded as a long-refuted error, deserving no further attention."[2]

For Hegel it is the philosophy of Kant that, more than any other, is responsible for creating the cultural situation in which it counts as the highest philosophical insight that the knowledge of God is not even possible. Kant's critical defense of synthetic a priori cognition against Hume's skepticism—for example, the causal principle on which science depends—achieves the universality and objective validity of such concepts as formally constitutive of objects, while at the same time restricting their valid employment to possible experience. To be cognition, thought is restricted to thinking what is empirically sensibly given. This restriction implies that rationalist metaphysics—including natural theology—is no longer possible.[3] When God is taken to be a transcendent Idea of reason, an unknowable beyond (*Jenseits*), theological cognition is discredited.

[1] *LPR* 1. 86–7. This quotation is from Hegel's own lecture manuscript (1821).

[2] *LPR* 1. 86–7.

[3] Kant's *Critique* ended substance metaphysics. For Kant a metaphysics of experience is possible that salvages science from skepticism; but God is transcendent *Jenseits* and thus unknowable. For Hegel, Kant's critical philosophy is just as dogmatically skeptical as Hume's and manifests the death both of God and of substance metaphysics. Cf. nn. 57, 67.

Moreover, Kant's attack on the theological proofs discredited not merely this or that particular proof, but rather the very enterprise of proving the existence of God. Hegel observes that Kant's attack has been so influential that even theologians have abandoned the project of theological proofs, and that substantive inquiries into the nature of God have all but ceased.[4] Thus, instead of theology being regarded as the queen of the sciences, the doctrine of God now belongs to the doctrine of religion, as a subfield within anthropology, a postulate of practical reason possessing only subjective validity.

One of the "infinite mass of objects" that the modern age "knows" is Kant's critical project itself. Kant seeks to settle questions that have been extensively but inconclusively discussed, by determining which questions lie within the scope of human reason's competence to answer, and which do not. The critique of reason is a new sort of inquiry—namely, not an inquiry into objects known, but rather one into the conditions of possibility of objects of knowledge. To be knowable, an object must be given in sensible intuition whose forms are space and time, and thinkable through the categories of the understanding—for example, cause–effect, substance, and so on. The result of such critical inquiry is that certain types of cognition—natural science and mathematics—prove to be justifiable; other types of cognition, including the objects of metaphysics (self, world, and God), are not. No intuitions correspond to these objects, and attempts to think them violate the critical principle that concepts without intuitions are empty and that attempts to think by concepts alone fall into contradictions that are symptomatic of metaphysical illusion. Kant excludes transcendent metaphysics; only an immanent metaphysics of experience is possible.

Hegel points out that Kant takes for granted an instrumental metaphor of cognition.[5] This instrumental metaphor shapes critical philosophy as inquiry into cognition understood as an organon or instrument. The inquiry is supposed to determine in advance questions about the nature and limitation of the instrument. Hegel asks, how is this inquiry to be carried out? Can it be carried out in any way other than cognitively? If so, the demand involves a requirement that cancels itself—that is, one seeks to know before one knows.

> If we ought not to begin philosophizing until we have cognized reason rationally, then we cannot begin at all. . . . This is the same demand that St Scholasticus makes who does not want to go into the water until he is able to swim. To learn to swim one must go into the water. One cannot make cognition into one's object without thereby behaving cognitively at the same time.[6]

[4] *LPR* 1. 163: "nowadays we merely hear religion talked about but find no investigations into God's nature . . . God as such is not made the object of inquiry . . . Only our relation to God or religion is an object of inquiry for us."

[5] *PhS* §§73–4. Kant conceives critique as an organon.

[6] *LPR* 1. 139. I have altered the Gascon named in the text to St Scholasticus. Cf. *EL* §10.

Further, as we have seen, one result of critique is a restriction of cognition to finitude because the limits imposed by the necessary conditions of possibility of cognition are absolute. But Hegel replies that the project of determining the limits of cognition presupposes some transcendence of those very limits. Kant has to transgress the limits to cognition that he lays down as limits in order to be able to determine them—to wit, "there can be no knowledge of limit unless the unlimited is on this side in consciousness."[7] Kant implicitly has to know more than he critically claims it is possible to know in order to do critique.

Moreover, Kant never asked himself, "What is the status and conditions of possibility of critical philosophy itself?" Clearly it is not an empirical psychology or an empirical natural science such as it purports to justify. Yet nowhere does Kant explain the epistemological possibility of the critical philosophy itself, or justify its transcendental inquiry as cognition. As Fichte pointed out, Kant failed to ask about the conditions of all philosophy, including critical philosophy itself.[8] When this question is addressed, Fichte, Schelling and Hegel believe that philosophy is possible only as system and articulated totality. Stanley Rosen helpfully describes Hegel's critique of critique in the following way:

> As a systematic thinker who addressed himself to "the whole" and who is notorious for the assertion that "the true is the whole" (or "totality": das Ganze), Hegel had no place in his thought for metaphilosophy in the sense of an activity that is external to or more universal than philosophy. . . . Stated with respect to the primacy of the science of logic, then, philosophy is ontological in the sense that it exhibits the categorial structure of anything whatsoever.[9]

To be sure, Hegel did not escape Kant's influence, which was both positive and negative. He praised Kant's rediscovery of Aristotle's concept of inner purposiveness; he accepted Kant's primacy of the practical as the locus of the God-question; however, he also thought that Kant failed to execute consistently his own claim, and that he undermined it with his doctrine of the postulates of practical reason that have only subjective validity and that achieve not genuine, but rather only a spurious, infinity.

Hegel discovered that, when he regarded Kant's thought at close range, especially his attack on the theological proofs and on theology as metaphysical science, Kant's thought was pervaded by ambiguity, not merely by the ambiguity of a mixed transcendental philosophy, but rather by an unresolved clash of concepts of reason in the transcendental dialectic itself. In his lectures on the *History of Philosophy*, Hegel calls attention to what he calls the "perpetual

[7] *EL* §60R.

[8] "Kant neglected to pose this question to himself, for nowhere did he discuss the foundation of all philosophy" (J. G. Fichte, "Second Introduction *to Wissenschafslehre*," in *Introductions to Wissenschaftslehre*, trans. D. Breazeale (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994), 56).

[9] *HSL* 5–7; *KL* 134–67).

oscillation in Kant's philosophy"—to wit, "Kant exhibited the extremes of opposition in their one-sidedness, and also expressed the reconciliation of the contradiction; reason posits unity.... Kant however says that this [unity] is only a mode of our reflecting judgment; life itself is not so."[10] On the one hand, Kant claims that what is true is the isolation, separation, and irreducible opposition between things, and, on the other, a few moments later he declares that what is true is not the abstract separation and isolation, but rather the unity of things formerly asserted to be isolated, separated, and opposed.[11]

There is a reason for this "oscillation" in the transcendental dialectic of the *First Critique*. Here Kant oscillates between a skeptical view of reason that takes it to be merely the understanding in illegitimate transcendent employment, and an idealist view that takes reason to be independent of the understanding. This oscillation reflects Kant's deep-rooted belief in the autonomy and ultimate validity of pure thought. Hegel's identification of Kant's oscillation receives scholarly support from Norman Kemp Smith, who explores what he calls Kant's "wavering" between an idealist view and a skeptical view of reason in transcendental dialectic.[12] Accordingly we shall begin with an overview and summary of Kemp Smith's commentary on Kant's transcendental dialectic, because it frames the disputed issues and helps bring into focus Hegel's relation to and disagreement with Kant. What is in dispute are Kant's critical solutions to—Hegel would say suppression of—the fundamental problems of reason and cognition. Kant's solutions may be sufficient for Kant's purposes, if those are primarily to justify the natural sciences against Hume's skepticism. But Kant also wants something more—to wit, a defense of autonomy and the primacy of practical reason. In the latter case Kant's critical philosophy requires the treatment of theology as an object not of cognition, but of moral faith, as a need or postulate of practical reason. For Hegel, Kant's restriction of cognition reduces philosophy to a moral faith that dissembles at its core the spurious self-contradictory infinity of the "ought."[13] Moreover, by depriving religion and philosophy of the cognition of God who is the truth, critical philosophy constitutes the death of God in modernity, which even in Hegel's day had already achieved the status of "a universally acknowledged truth, a settled issue, a kind of prejudice."[14] Hegel interrogates this prejudice: "What else ... would be worth comprehending if God is incomprehensible?"[15]

Kant's attack on the theological proofs, including the ontological proof, is the negative conclusion of the transcendental dialectic section. The transcendental dialectic, interpreted by Kemp Smith, shows Kant eventually siding with Hume against the idealist view of reason on questions of existence—as Hegel charged.[16] Hegel's discussion of Kant and the ontological argument

[10] *LHP* 3. 472. [11] *EL* §60. [12] *Commentary*, 560.
[13] *SL* 132–7. See also Hegel's analysis of the moral vision of the world in *PhS* §§599–631.
[14] *LPR* 1. 86. [15] *LPR* 1. 88 n. 20. [16] *SL* 594.

reflects his critique of modern, Humean skepticism from the perspective of ancient skepticism. Hume's skepticism is skeptical about concepts but not about impressions. It is dogmatic about impressions. Hegel claims that, while skepticism and dogmatism seem to be opposed, there is a third alternative—to wit, speculative philosophy. The latter includes skepticism as part of its method and procedure, while overcoming the incoherence of skepticism's own skeptical self-interpretation. Hegel's overcoming of skepticism is incorporated into his reconstruction of the ontological argument when he shows that its conclusion must proceed from and be mediated by a negation of a prior moment of skeptical negation—that is, the claim that concept and being are absolutely different—in Kant's terms, that concepts without intuitions are empty.

2. KANT'S UNRESOLVED TRANSCENDENTAL DIALECTIC

It should be noted that in some quarters the transcendental dialectic is considered to be the "bad Kant," since it allegedly opens the way to the putative dogmatism and metaphysics of post-Kantian German idealism.[17]

[17] For the distinction between the "good Kant" and "bad Kant," see Kevin Harrelson's important essay, "Hegel and the Modern Canon," *Owl of Minerva*, 1–2 (2012–13), 1–35; cf. p. 12. The so-called "good Kant" approved by the Neo-Kantians was confined to the transcendental analytic of the *First Critique*, and was constructed as an anti-metaphysical, anti-systematic epistemologist. The "bad Kant" consisted of the transcendental dialectic, and the *Second* and *Third Critiques*, because this part of Kant's thought allegedly led to the metaphysical and systematic "excesses" of German idealism. By constructing the reduced "good Kant" as an epistemologist/philosopher of science, the canonical history of modern philosophy could conclude with the "good Kant" *and exclude* Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel as "dogmatic metaphysics." The exclusion of the "bad Kant" as well as Hegel from the canon of modern philosophy is part of the anti-metaphysical strategy of the broad framework of nineteenth-century neo-Kantianism that continues to be the dominant framework of contemporary philosophy—both analytic and continental. Harrelson concludes his essay with a reference to the recent non-metaphysical interpretations of Hegel. According to Harrelson, the "non-metaphysical Hegel" is a reductive revisioning of Hegel's thought that expunges its metaphysics so that a "neo-Kantian 'good Hegel'" can be resurrected in the shadow of the "neo-Kantian 'good Kant'" (p. 27). Just as the "good Kant" was constructed by reducing his thought to fit the predetermined interests and ideology of certain scholars (Eduard Zeller and Otto Liebmann), so the earliest non-metaphysical Hegelians began by banishing Hegel's *Logic* and all the *Berlin Lectures on Philosophy of Spirit*, *Philosophy of Religion*, and *Philosophy of History*; these were proclaimed to be *contrary* to the true spirit of his philosophy (p. 28)! The paradoxical reason for the exclusion of this material is that these scholars wanted to *fit Hegel into* the anti-metaphysical neo-Kantian narrative that was originally used to *exclude* him. However, the anti-metaphysical narrative of the neo-Kantian frame itself is unchallenged and remains. Thus the narrative that was initially used to *exclude* Hegel now can "include" him, but only as the "non-metaphysical Hegel." However, this "inclusion" comes at the price of excluding the interests in religion and society that led Hegel to become a philosopher in the first place and that remained important to him throughout his career. Moreover, the "non-metaphysical Hegel" is an ironic construction without a sense of its

In contrast, the "good Kant" is a more recent construct that truncates and reduces Kant's philosophy to the transcendental analytic and to first-person individualist epistemology.[18] This truncation excludes not only transcendental dialectic, but also the *Second* and *Third Critiques*. However, the purpose of the truncation is not to advance scholarship on Kant's philosophy as a whole, but rather to "shut the door" to the "bad Kant" of the transcendental dialectic and to the development of German idealism from Kant to Hegel. This "bad Kant" interpretation was used to exclude both the later Kant and Hegel from the canonical literature of the history of modern philosophy.[19] Hegel himself is, of course, one of the earliest and most trenchant critics of the Kantian frame and Kant's attack on the theological proofs. This will be our concern here and in the following two chapters.

In a useful discussion of the *First Critique*'s section on transcendental dialectic, Norman Kemp Smith shows that what Kant calls dialectic is in fact a clash between an idealist view of reason and a skeptical view of reason. In the earlier parts of the section, the idealist view is dominant; but in the later parts it is the skeptical view that comes to the fore, above all in the attack on the theological proofs in the discussion of the transcendental ideal. Nevertheless, the two views exist side by side in tension, a tension never finally resolved by Kant.

The skeptical view of reason is most forcefully stated in the transcendental analytic, but its implications are developed in the transcendental dialectic, particularly the transcendental ideal. All knowledge is restricted to sense experience; transcendent metaphysics of the ideas is excluded. Such metaphysics is a perennial inclination to error that must be constantly debunked and corrected via a psychology of metaphysics as subjective contradiction and a logic of illusion.[20] This skeptical view considers reason to be simply the understanding in illegitimate transcendent employment. But were this view consistently developed, it could undermine the possibility of critical philosophy itself. For critical philosophy is not itself a natural science such as it purports to justify. The skeptical view of reason in transcendental dialectic illustrates Hume's thesis that, with respect to the ideas of reason, we are faced with a choice between a false reason and no reason at all.

own irony, for it lacks an acknowledgment of Hegel's critique of the Kantian frame that is evident to anyone familiar with the *Logic* and the "banished" Hegelian literature.

[18] Otto Liebmann, *Kant und die Epigonen* (Stuttgart: Schobe, 1856), cited in Harrelson, "Hegel and the Modern Canon."

[19] For a parallel account to Harrelson's, see Frederick Beiser, "Dark Days: Anglophone Scholarship since the 1960s," in Espen Hammer (ed.), *German Idealism: Contemporary Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 70–90, and Beiser, "The Puzzling Hegel Renaissance," in F. C. Beiser (ed.), *Cambridge Companion to Hegel and Nineteenth-Century Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 1–14.

[20] *Commentary*, 426.

The idealist view regards reason as a distinct, independent metaphysical faculty that brings forth a priori concepts distinct from the concepts of the understanding. To emphasize the distinction, Kant designates these concepts ideas that in turn require a transcendental deduction and metaphysical deduction. They limit and direct the understanding. In the course of the discussion, Kant becomes increasingly skeptical about the cognition of the ideas and their metaphysical employment. The main idea brought forth by reason is the unconditioned; the unconditioned has three determinate forms: the concept of the subject, the concept of the world, and the concept of God. But Kant becomes increasingly doubtful that the introduction of the word "unconditioned" suffices to show "whether I am thinking anything in the concept of the unconditionally necessary, or perhaps rather nothing at all."[21]

Kant tries, with varying degrees of success, to bring about a compromise between the idealist view of reason and the skeptical view. Part of this "compromise" is achieved by the mediating doctrine of transcendental illusion—to wit, an illusion that endures as a constant possibility even after it has been detected. The illusion is a confusion of the subjective necessity of our thought with the objective necessity of things. When these two are identified, the result is the illusory hypostatization of an idea. Yet the idea itself is subjectively necessary; that is, it originates out of a subjective necessity and expresses a practical need of reason. Although the ideas are fictions, they are also practically necessary and indispensable. Kant assigns them a regulative function, in distinction from a constitutive cognitive function—that is, knowledge of an object. The regulative function of ideas is Kant's compromise between the idealist and the skeptical views of reason. The result of this compromise is the spurious infinite that Hegel identifies as the highest reconciliation of rational contradictions in Kant's and Fichte's philosophies.[22]

The chief transcendental illusion that is perhaps the cause of all the others is the belief that the ideals of explanation that satisfy reason must represent the nature of reality.[23] When we think and act upon this belief we fall into contradictions that reveal that the ideals to which we are committed by practical needs are of a merely subjective character and may never be legitimately interpreted as representing the actual nature of the independently real, the way things really are. Rather, they are imaginary completions of the incomplete and fragmentary. One major contributor to this chief transcendental illusion is theology. Kant's attack on the theological proofs seeks to expose them as transcendental illusion that confuses the subjective necessity of thought with the objective necessity of things, and, as we shall see, the worst offender here is the ontological proof. Kant's compromise between the idealist and skeptical view of reason is evident in his regulative doctrine of the "as if"

[21] Kant, *First Critique*, A593/B621. [22] *SL* 131–6. [23] *Commentary*, 428.

applied to metaphysical theology: the ideal of a supreme being is "nothing but a regulative principle of reason, which directs us to look upon . . . the world *as if* it originated from an all-sufficient necessary cause."[24] How is this regulative concept a compromise? The necessity of the idea is regarded like the law of contradiction—that is, not as objective and constitutive, but only as subjective, explicable psychologically as a need of reason.

According to the skeptical view of reason, all ideas are grounded in and based on experience. They are generalizations and idealizations of experience. Here the central question is, how are the ideas formed—that is, their genesis, not the question of their meaning, truth, and validity. They are formed by the removal of limits to which they are subject in sense experience. Thus the concept of the infinite or the unconditioned is formed by removal of those limits and conditions by and through which anything determinate can be apprehended. Such ideas of the infinite are simply schematic forms. They are imaginary extensions, in ideal form, of the unity that understanding has discovered in actual experience, and that, under the inspiration of such ideals, it seeks to realize in ever-increasing degree. However, since the sole legitimate function of the Ideas is that of inspiring and guiding the understanding in its empirical employment, they must never be interpreted as having cognitive metaphysical significance.[25]

According to the idealist view, reason is distinct from the understanding, and, like the latter, conditions experience. All consciousness is consciousness of a whole that precedes and conditions its parts. Consciousness of limitation presupposes a consciousness of what is beyond the limit; consciousness of the unconditioned is prior to, and renders possible, our consciousness of the contingently given. Such consciousness of the whole cannot be accounted for by assuming that we are first conscious of the conditioned, and then proceed through the removal of its limitations to form an idea of an unconditioned whole. The idea of the unconditioned is distinct in nature from all other concepts, and cannot be derived from them. It must be a pure a priori product of the faculty of reason. As it is involved in all consciousness, it conditions all other concepts. The idea of the unconditioned must, therefore, be counted as being similar to the categories—a condition of the possibility of experience. Its significance must not be looked for save in that Ideal, to which no experience, and no concept other than itself, can ever be adequate. Thus on the skeptical view, the content of the Ideas is merely empirical, and sense experience is our sole criterion of truth and reality; on the idealist view, the ideas have to be recognized as pure a priori concepts, and are themselves the standards by which even empirical truth can alone be determined.[26]

[24] *First Critique*, A619/B647. [25] *Commentary*, 429–30. [26] *Commentary*, 430.

Kant's critical solution is forged in the crucible of the problem of a priori synthesis, which Kant discovered in his reply to Hume's skepticism, but did not fully appreciate until his treatment of the ontological proof in *First Critique*. The solution takes the shape of asserting the priority of logic and epistemology over metaphysics—to wit, the metaphysical validity or invalidity of thought must be decided prior to any attempt to discover a positive solution of metaphysical problems. All questions regarding the nature of the absolutely real are made to take secondary rank, yielding precedence to those of logical theory. The critical philosophy seeks to determine what questions can be, and what questions cannot be, decided by reason and rational investigation. It seeks to determine the scope and limits of possible cognition prior to engaging in cognitive inquiry.[27]

The outcome of the transcendental dialectic is that, while a metaphysics of experience is possible that justifies natural sciences against Hume's skepticism, this justification carries with it the restriction of the categories of the understanding to empirical experience for their valid employment—to wit, thinking objects given in sensible intuition. However, the move that justifies an immanent metaphysics of experience also excludes the possibility of a transcendent metaphysics of the ideas. Since the ideas are prescribed by reason, they are transcendental; but, as exceeding the boundaries of possible experience, they are transcendent; they may be approximated but never attained by experience. They are "merely ideas." Since the ideas are transcendent to possible cognition, they define problems for which there is no solution.[28] Yet they are important.

Kant interprets the ideas in a regulative sense—that is, as fictions, heuristic principles that guide the understanding in its empirical employment. However, to treat these as constitutive, to claim there is reason in the world, and to employ the transcendent ideas of reason as explanations and determinations of their putative objects, is to fall into transcendental illusion. In this way Kant is supposed to have resolved the conflict in the transcendental dialectic—with the doctrine of the regulative function of ideas. But Hegel asks, how the ideas can perform their regulative function for our cognition of the world if they are in no sense constitutive or objective? On the other hand, if the regulative doctrine of ideas is true, is metaphysics avoided? A recent study of the regulative ideas confirms Hegel's point; it comes to the conclusion that the unity allegedly provided by the regulative (as-if) role of ideas "is itself precisely the sort of metaphysical claim that it is meant to help us avoid."[29]

Moreover, Kant claims that the ideas of self, world, and God, which are transcendent for theoretical reason, become immanent for practical reason as necessary postulates of moral action. In the sphere of morals, the ideas of

[27] *Commentary*, 432. [28] *Commentary*, 452.

[29] Avery Goldman, *Kant and the Subject of Critique* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 183–4.

reason must never be called or described as "mere ideas." Though they are only partially realizable, they are genuinely actual.[30] Nevertheless, since these postulates are valid only for practical purposes, they do not involve cognition. They are expressions of moral faith, and thus possess only subjective validity. The faith they express is that what the moral law commands is capable of realization, or, more briefly, that "ought implies can." However, this notorious doctrine of the "ought" fails to rise to the level of genuine infinity, and is rather "die schlechte Unendlichkeit," the leveled, finite, spurious infinite. It is for Kant the highest level of resolution of the contradictions of reason, but in fact clings to finitude and thus to contradiction.[31] This subordinates religion to morality and constitutes the wretchedness of the moral vision of the world: "Unhappy the age that must content itself with being forever told only that there may be a God!"[32] In Kant's postulates of practical reason, philosophy becomes moral faith, which opens the door to Jacobi's dogmatism of immediate certainty. Kant's critique achieves the complete paralysis of reason that turns philosophy into immediate knowing; Jacobi accomplishes its suicide—that is, the recognition of reason's incapacity to grasp the truth, proving its own nothingness.[33]

3. CRITICAL IDEALISM AS METAPHYSICAL SKEPTICISM AND COVERT NIHILISM

The preceding summary of Norman Kemp Smith's analysis of the outcome of transcendental dialectic tends to confirm Hegel's reading of Kant—to wit, that Kant decided for appearance against reason, and that Kant agrees with Hume on how to settle questions of existence.[34] In his attack on theology and the traditional proofs for the existence of God that conclude the transcendental dialectic, Kant is a metaphysical skeptic.

The topic of skepticism is one that Hegel studied and that informs his philosophy and philosophical method. Both the *Phenomenology* and the *Logic* are carefully constructed to meet classical skeptical objections.[35] In his early

[30] *Commentary*, 452. [31] *SL* 136. [32] *LPR* 1. 444 n.

[33] Hegel writes that Kant "laid the basis for the complete paralysis of reason, which has since his day been content to be nothing more than an immediate knowing"—i.e. Jacobi (*LProofs*, 163). According to Jacobi, "thought is capable of comprehending one thing only, its incapacity to grasp the truth . . . with the result that suicide is its highest calling" (*LProofs*, 42).

[34] *FK* 90; *SL* 592; *EL* §§47, 39; *Commentary*, 528: "All judgments, so far as they refer to existence, as distinct from mere possibility, are hypothetical, and serve to define a reality that is only contingently given. In adopting this position, Kant is in entire agreement with Hume."

[35] Cf. Michael Forster, *Hegel and Scepticism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989); see also Robert Williams, "Hegel and Scepticism," *Owl of Minerva*, 24/1 (Fall 1992), 71–82.

essay "On the Relationship of Skepticism to Philosophy," Hegel distinguishes between modern skepticism represented by David Hume, that is skeptical about *reason*, but *not* about impressions and sense-data, and the ancient skepticism, which, "when a fact is established as certain, understands how to prove that certainty is nothing."[36] According to Hegel, ancient skepticism is more radical (less dogmatic) and more consistent than modern skepticism, in which both dogmatic and skeptical elements coexist.

In Hegel's view, modern skepticism is inferior to ancient because it is inconsistent—that is, dogmatic, and never squarely faced its own dogmatism. In Hegel's view, modern skepticism lacks the noblest side of ancient skepticism: its criticism of the dogmatism of ordinary consciousness.[37] Modern skeptics presuppose the certainties of ordinary consciousness. In this respect modern skepticism has kept pace with the

> communal degeneration of philosophy and of the world in general, until finally in these most recent times it has sunk so low in company with dogmatism that for both of them nowadays *the facts of consciousness have an indubitable certainty* . . . so that dogmatism and skepticism coincide with one another on the underside, and offer each other the hand of perfect friendship . . . [38]

In siding with Hume, Kant sided with a skepticism about reason that was itself dogmatic, to wit, about impressions. Indeed, Kant's own view of metaphysics and theology is marked by both strict theoretical skepticism about the ideas of reason and dogmatic certainty about the fact of reason. Let us recall that the appeal to so-called "facts of consciousness" (*Tatsachen des Bewusstseins*) received a strong impetus from Kant's *Second Critique*—to wit, his appeal to the fact of reason.[39] Let us review some of Kant's assertions concerning this "fact."

> Practical reason itself, without any collusion with the speculative, provides reality to a supersensible . . . category of causality, i.e., to freedom. (*Second Critique*, 6)
>
> He [the moral agent] judges that he can do something because he knows that he ought, and he recognizes that he is free—a fact which, without the moral law, would have remained unknown to him. (*Second Critique*, 30)
>
> The consciousness of this fundamental law may be called a fact of reason, since one cannot ferret it out from antecedent data of reason, such as the consciousness of freedom (for this is not antecedently given), and since it forces itself upon us as a synthetic proposition a priori based on no pure or empirical intuition. (*Second Critique*, 31)

[36] Hegel, "On the Relationship of Skepticism to Philosophy," in *BKH* 332.

[37] To be sure, Kant charges the natural metaphysical disposition of ordinary consciousness on display in the cosmological argument with being full of error.

[38] "Skepticism," in *BKH* 330; emphasis added.

[39] Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. Lewis W. Beck (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Library of Liberal Arts, Prentice-Hall, 1993), 31.

> The fact just mentioned is undeniable. (*Second Critique*, 32)
>
> Moreover, the moral law is given as an apodictically certain fact, as it were, of pure reason, a fact of which we are *a priori* conscious. . . . The objective reality of the moral law can be proved through no deduction, through no exertion of the theoretical, speculative or empirically supported reason, and even if one were willing to renounce its apodictic certainty, it could not be confirmed by any experience and thus proved *a posteriori*. Nevertheless it is firmly established of itself. (*Second Critique*, 48–9)

The point here is not to cast doubt on the fact of reason or the moral law. After all, Hegel thinks that Kant got right the connection between the consciousness of freedom and the question of God, so that freedom becomes the starting point, but only the starting point, of the elevation of finite spirit to God. Although religion eclipses morality, it starts from a similar "place"—that is, the consciousness of freedom. Rather, the point here is to note and underscore Kant's remarkable combination of indubitable certainty concerning the *fact* of reason (the moral law) with serious skepticism about the *ideas* of reason. On the one hand, Kant holds that the fact of reason is undeniable, that it opens access to the supersensuous; conversely, practical action inverts the ideas from transcendent to immanent use as constitutive of practice and morality. On the other hand, Kant restricts cognition to finitude, attacks theology and the theological proofs as metaphysical illusion, seeks to resolve the problem of transcendental illusion by his doctrine of the regulative use of ideas and by qualifying the postulates of practical reason as valid not for cognition, but only for practical purposes.

After praising Kant for getting right the connection between freedom and transcendence, Hegel complains that Kant compromised if not undermined his starting point in the consciousness of freedom opened up by the moral law, with the subjectivism inherent in his doctrines of regulative ideas and postulates of practical reason.[40] For Hegel, Kant never successfully resolved the clash between idealist and skeptical views of reason constitutive of the transcendental dialectic. Hegel comments on the opposition between idealism and skepticism in Kant's thought:

> Thus we can distinguish two types of spirit that become visible in the Kantian philosophy, one being that of the [idealist] philosophy which is continually ruined by the system [of the immanent metaphysics of experience in transcendental analytic], the other that of the system which aims to "do in" the idea of reason.[41]

Hegel portrays the opposition between idealist and skeptical views of reason in transcendental dialectic with the following image: "the great idea of reason . . . which lies at its foundation [and] could be dragged out of the shadows and set

[40] *E.* §552R. [41] "Skepticism," in *BKH* 352.

forth openly so that it appears like a magnificent ruin, in which the understanding has claimed squatter's rights."[42]

In his *History of Philosophy* Hegel comments on Kant's transcendental dialectic and critical philosophy generally as follows:

> Kant took the ideas . . . only in a subjective sense; they are only regulative ideas, not objective determinations. . . . This is the perpetual contradiction in Kant's philosophy: Kant sets up the highest opposition and also expresses its resolution. He exhibits both the extremes of one-sidedness and opposition, and likewise their reconciliation and unity. . . . [However] this unity is only a subjective mode of our reflection . . . But life itself is not so; we are merely accustomed so to regard it.[43]

For Kant dialectic has primarily negative significance.[44] In negative dialectic, dogmatism and skepticism coexist and coincide on the underside. This coincidence occurs in Kant's distinction between theoretical and practical reason. Kant is both *dogmatic* about the *fact* of reason—the moral law—and *skeptical* about the ideas of reason, including the idea of God, to which the fact of reason supposedly provides access. Hegel remarks that Kant's philosophy refutes the objective dogmatism of metaphysics and transforms it into a subjective dogmatism.[45] The ideas of reason shift from the transcendent Beyond to an immanent use in moral praxis. Kant's doctrine of the postulates becomes "the point where philosophy terminates in [moral] faith."[46] In Hegel's view, the subjective idealism inherent in Kant's doctrine of the postulates "laid the basis for the complete paralysis of reason, which has since his day been content to be nothing more than an immediate knowing."[47] Thus both his later treatment of Kant's *Critique of Judgment* and his earlier treatment of Kant's theoretical and practical reason embody Hegel's view that in Kant's resolution of the opposing views in the transcendental dialectic he decided without reservation for appearance,[48] and against the rational–idealist interpretation of the ideas and of truth.

Hegel claims that there is an alternative to the opposition between dogmatism and skepticism. The claim that the two are antithetical and therefore mutually self-canceling is precisely the skeptical view exhibited by Kant in his transcendental dialectic and its antinomies.[49] It finds expression in Kant's

[42] "Skepticism," in *BKH* 352. [43] *Werke*, 20. 380; *LHP* 3. 472.
[44] Kant, *First Critique*, A597/B625 n.; *SL* 832–7. [45] *LHP* 3. 427. [46] *FK* 67.
[47] *LProofs*, 163. The reference is both to Jacobi's immediate knowing and to the immediate knowing inherent in Hume's empiricist doctrine of impressions.
[48] *FK* 90.
[49] To be sure, sheer antithesis is true only of the mathematical antinomies; Kant's critical solution to the dynamical antinomies is that both opposites, e.g., necessity and freedom, are compatible because each refers to a different dimension of things, to wit, the phenomenal and the noumenal respectively. In this case one opposition (necessity *v.* freedom) is exchanged for another (phenomena and noumena). Kant's criticism of traditional metaphysics depends on his negative doctrine of the noumenon, which he is forced to modify when he takes up the

negative view of dialectic, and in his combination of a skeptical theoretical reason with a dogmatic assertion of the fact of reason and the moral faith of practical reason that one can do what one ought to do.

For Hegel speculative philosophy is a third alternative—to wit, it is both skeptical about dogmatism and yet affirmative. For Hegel every genuine philosophy includes a skeptical dimension, but it is not for that reason skepticism. Hegel defends the tropes of ancient skepticism as containing rational demands that dogmatism is unable to answer owing to its abstract one-sidedness: "The essence of dogmatism consists in this, that it posits something finite, as burdened with an opposition (e.g., a pure subject or a pure object, or in dualism the duality as opposed to the identity) as the absolute."[50] The tropes succeed in undermining dogmatism—for example, by bringing equipollence objections against immediate one-sided abstractions and assertions etc. Thus Hegel writes:

> Reason shows that . . . this absolute . . . has a relation to what is excluded from it, and only exists through and in this relation to an other, so that it is not absolute. . . . Against dogmatism these tropes are rational in this respect, that they let the opposite moment from which dogmatism abstracted come on stage against the finite moment of dogmatism.[51]

However, while the skeptical tropes undermine dogmatism—that is, dogmatic one-sidedness—they are "plainly useless against philosophy since they contain plainly reflective concepts. . . . Against dogmatism they must necessarily be victorious, but in the face of philosophy they fall apart internally, or they are themselves dogmatic."[52] They fall apart over the much debated question whether the skeptical tropes are the dogmas of skepticism. When skepticism denies that it has a dogma, it interprets its own tropes skeptically,—to wit, "it seems to me." In such a skeptically skeptical answer skepticism undermines and refutes itself—to wit, it undermines the objective validity of the tropes as rational arguments against dogmatism, and, by treating its own doctrines as mere opinion, skepticism cancels the intersubjective communicability and verifiability of its own claims and procedures.[53] Self-negating skeptical skepticism is world-negating, self-subverting nihilism.

The rational, Hegel tells us, "is relation itself. . . . The rational has no opposite . . . for it includes both of the finite opposites within itself."[54] This early assertion anticipates his later doctrines of speculative dialectic, mediated immediacy, mutual recognition, the true infinite, and that the truth is the

question how do I know that I am free and famously answers that the moral law is the *ratio cognoscendi* of freedom, and that freedom is the *ratio essendi* of the moral law (only a free being can apprehend a moral imperative—to wit, something that ought to be). See *Second Critique*, 4 n.

[50] "Skepticism," in *BKH*. [51] "Skepticism," in *BKH* 335–6.
[52] "Skepticism," in *BKH* 335, 338. [53] "Skepticism," in *BKH* 338.
[54] "Skepticism," in *BKH* 336–7.

whole. In Hegel's view, skepticism embodies rational demands, but when it interprets its tropes skeptically—that is, subjectively—it subverts them:

> In this extreme of supreme consistency . . . which . . . grew *into a subjectivity of knowledge directed against knowledge*, skepticism was bound to become inconsistent, for the extreme cannot maintain itself without [its] opposite, so pure negativity or subjectivity is either nothing at all because it nullifies itself at the extreme, or else it must at the same time become supremely objective.[55]

In his skepticism essay, Hegel articulates a speculative philosophical critique of both dogmatism (its immediate one-sided assertions) and skepticism (the rational has no opposite because it is not only open to opposing views, but reconciles and includes them) that he will elaborate and employ throughout his later writings, notably the *Phenomenology* and the *Logic*. In the latter Hegel deconstructs the one-sided oppositions of the understanding (for example, the Kantian antinomies) that, left to themselves, are negative symptoms of illusion, and reconstructs/reconciles them as transitional moments within determinate universals, articulated totalities, and vital processes.[56]

Hegel criticizes modern skepticism for its transformation of cognition into finite cognition. The latter entails not just the difference, but also the sundering of the rational as relation:

> This sundering of the rational, in which thinking and being are one, and the absolute holding fast to this opposition, in other words, the *understanding made absolute*, constitutes the endlessly repeated and universally applied ground of this dogmatic skepticism. . . . for as we all know, it is the Kantian philosophy—which from the limited standpoint from which it is idealism (in its deduction of the categories) does indeed sublate this antithesis; but which is otherwise inconsistent enough to make the antithesis [of thought and being] into the supreme principle of speculation; the insistence on this antithesis comes out most explicitly and with infinite self-satisfaction against the so-called "Ontological Proof" of the existence of God.[57]

In Hegel's view, Kant's philosophy is characterized by the sundering of the rational in which thinking and being are one; the result of such sundering is the separation of the reason that is conscious in us from the reason that is in the world.[58] Moreover, by insisting on this separation, Kantian philosophy emphatically becomes the understanding made absolute. Limit, Difference, and opposition are final, and incapable of mediation:

> once this basically false picture of rational thinking is presupposed, there is nothing further to be done, except to repeat forever that ground and grounded,

[55] "Skepticism," in *BKH* 338; emphasis added. [56] *SL* 833–6.
[57] "Skepticism," in *BKH* 339–40. Hegel anticipates Kemp Smith's point that Kant discovered the depth of the problem of a priori synthesis in existence claims in the ontological argument.
[58] *EL* §6R.

> concept and thing are different modes; that all rational cognition aims just to pluck a being out of thinking, existence out of concepts (as it is put in words that are likewise Kantian).[59]

For Hegel the truth is the whole. But when the elements of the idea are sundered and separated into abstract units, they are untrue.[60] This untruth is already expressed in Hegel's questioning of Kant's postulate doctrine:

> According to Kant . . . the postulates and the faith that goes with them are subjective. The only question is, how to take this "subjective." Is it the identity of infinite thought and being, of reason and its reality, that is subjective? Or is it only the postulating and the believing of them? Is it the content or the form of the postulates that is subjective? It cannot be the content that is subjective for the negative content of the postulates immediately suspends everything subjective.[61]

To be sure, for Hegel the content of the God-postulate is best articulated in the ontological proof: "This idea of the absolute identity of thought and being is the very one which the ontological proof and all true philosophy recognize as the . . . primary idea as well as the only true and philosophical one."[62] It is this idea that Hegel clearly has in mind in the above passage when he interrogates whether it is the content or the form of the postulates that is subjective. Kant's attack on the ontological proof is a prime example of the sundering of the elements of the idea—to wit, the unity in difference of thought and being. In one sense Hegel agrees with this sundering—to wit, that concept and being *are* different. "Quite so; thus separated they are finite and untrue. But it is precisely the concern of reason . . . not to remain with the finite and untrue, nor to take them as something absolute."[63] Hegel paraphrases Kant's famous "concepts without intuitions are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind," when he observes that, even in the ordinary sense, concepts without any objectivity are empty representations or opinions, and being without the concept is mere evanescent externality and appearance.[64]

Hegel's alternative to Kant is indebted to Kant. Hegel appropriates the concept of organism as internal purposiveness that Kant outlines in the *Third Critique*, purges it of Kant's subjective idealism that reduces it to a mere subjective maxim of judgment, and develops it into absolute or objective idealism. Hegel acknowledges that the idealist view of reason and ideas is present in Kant, but points out that Kant keeps qualifying this idealism as subjective idealism and thus reintroducing the very oppositions and antitheses that he says reason demands be overcome.[65] Hegel adds that in the idea the

[59] "Skepticism," in *BKH* 341. Note the echoes of Kant's critique of the ontological proof, the identity of thought and being constitutive of the concept. We shall address these issues in Ch. 2.
[60] *EL* §214R. [61] *FK* 95. [62] *FK* 94. [63] *LPR* 1. 70. [64] *LPR* 1. 70.
[65] Kant's qualification of idealist view of reason as a subjective idealism that treats the metaphysical ideas as regulative principles, constitutes the spurious infinite (*die schlecht Unendlichkeit*) as the central concept of his philosophy.

conflicts between freedom and necessity, concept and being, are suspended, that infinite thought is absolute reality—the absolute identity of thought and being. Recognizing that all this (except for the ontological proof) is implicitly there in Kant, and that in siding with Hume Kant reduces the unity in difference of thought and being to subjective idealism, "makes it all the harder to see the rational elements muddled up, and the highest idea corrupted with full consciousness, while reflexion and finite cognition are exalted above it."[66] In siding with Hume, Kant opted for the abstract universal and spurious infinite as his ultimate concepts, and non-contradiction as his ultimate principle.

4. HEGEL'S CRITIQUE OF KANT IN THE *LOGIC*

Kant's *Critiques* undermine the objective dogmatism of metaphysics. But Kant took over and adopted the traditional categories uncritically as *givens*. He failed to ask whether they were proper forms of truth.

> This [Kant's] philosophy made an end of the metaphysics of the understanding as an objective dogmatism, but in fact it merely transformed it into a subjective dogmatism, i.e., into a consciousness in which these same finite determinations of the understanding persist, and the question of what is true in and for itself has been abandoned.[67]

In adopting the traditional categories as givens, Kant inherited metaphysical positivism (atomism) from the tradition that conceals and suppresses negation and finds expression in the abstract universal.[68] This is one reason why Kant holds the view that things themselves are not contradictory; Kant shifts contradiction from things to thought, where, as merely subjective, it becomes a symptom of illusion, disorder, even dementia. Hegel's account of metaphysical positivism begins with a discussion of reality, quality, and negation. He points out: "in reality as quality with the accent on being, the fact is concealed that it contains determinateness and therefore also negation. Consequently reality is given the value of something positive from which negation, limitation and deficiency are excluded."[69] Metaphysical positivism excludes negation from the real, and fixes of terms in abstraction and isolation. Metaphysical

[66] *FK* 92. [67] *LHP* 3. 427.

[68] Hegel does not use the term "metaphysical positivism," although he plainly intends something like it in his account of classical metaphysics in *SL* 111–14, and in *EL* §§26–36, the "First Attitude of Thought towards Objectivity." For "metaphysical positivism," cf. Paul Redding, *Analytic Philosophy and the Return of Hegelian Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), ch. 8.

[69] *SL* 111.

positivism is the atomist metaphysics of the understanding that is embodied in traditional formal logic.[70]

Hegel analyzes this view of the world as rooted in sense impressions, and formalized by the understanding. He criticizes it in the following passage:

> For the non-speculative thinking of the understanding, difference remains difference, e.g., the antithesis of finite and infinite. Absoluteness is ascribed to both terms, yet each also has a relation to the other . . . in this way contradiction [antinomy] is posited. . . . The sensible in general has as its fundamental characteristic externality, the being of things outside each other. . . . Everything counts as independent; what counts for it is not to be the sort of thing that subsists because it possesses itself in another. For sense experience, two things cannot be in one and the same place; they exclude each other. But in the idea distinctions are not posited as exclusive of each other; rather they are found only in this mutual inclusion of the one with the other. *This is the truly supersensible realm.* . . . The understanding holds fast to the categories of thought, persisting with them as utterly independent of each other, remaining distinct, external to each other and fixed. The positive is not the same as the negative, the cause is not the effect, etc. But for the concept it is equally true that these distinctions are sublated. Precisely because they are distinctions, they remain finite, and *the understanding persists in finitude. . . . But the truth of the matter is that neither the finite nor the infinite standing over against it has any truth.*[71]

Hegel claims that the concept is an articulated whole or totality. As organized being, or living organism, the whole is the mutual relation and inclusion of its members; it is a unity in and through difference, a one that is also many. As such the whole is an affirmative, *objective* contradiction. The understanding cannot comprehend this, because its view is that contradiction and dialectic are negative—to wit, symptoms of illusion. The categories of the understanding are abstract identity and abstract difference; each thing is itself and nothing more. The understanding holds fast to the law of non-contradiction: whatever contains a contradiction is not logically possible and thus cannot be true. Since he believes that reality or things as they are in themselves cannot be contradictory, Kant shifts contradiction from things to our thought. The critical resolution of the antinomy between freedom and necessity, or between mechanism and teleology, denies that contradictions are objective. Instead their clashing principles are to be understood and treated as merely subjective maxims of judgment. To Hegel, Kant's subjectivizing of contradiction shows an excessive tenderness for mere things. "It would be a pity, he thinks, if they contradicted themselves. But that spirit [*Geist*], which is far higher, should be contradictory—that is not a pity at all."[72]

[70] *EL* §98. [71] *LPR* 3. 280–1. [72] *LHP* 3. 451.

In contrast, Hegel develops a view of contradiction as not merely objective, but also affirmative, expressed as infinite negativity—to wit, the negation of negation. Where Kant rejects objective contradiction in things themselves and treats it as merely subjective, Hegel replies:

> Whoever claims that nothing exists which carries in it a contradiction in the form of an identity of opposites is at the same time demanding that nothing living shall exist. For the power of life, and still more the might of the spirit, consists precisely in positing a contradiction in itself, enduring it, and overcoming it. This positing and resolving of the contradiction between the ideal unity and the real separatedness of the members constitutes the constant process of life, and life is only by being a process. . . . *This is the idealism of life*. For philosophy is not at all the only example of idealism; nature, as life, already makes a *matter of fact* what idealist philosophy brings to completion in its own spiritual field.[73]

The ontological proof in Hegel's view, embodies an affirmative resolution of contradiction that is immanent in and grounds not only life and living processes, but also spirit. The absolute idea, and God as spirit, is the chief exemplar of the positing and resolving of contradiction constitutive of the ontological argument recast as a philosophy of organized being. That is, the God that is manifest in the production and reconciliation of contradiction is no regulative idea, or subjective postulate that merely ought to be but is not. As we shall see, for Hegel the activity of positing and resolving contradictions is God's own ontological proof.

In Hegel's view, Kant oscillates between an objective idealism, according to which "the objectivity of thought is specifically enunciated [as] an identity of concept and thing which is truth,"[74] and a subjective idealism, according to which "concepts without intuitions are empty" and formal, and the ideas of reason are merely regulative principles. Hegel characterizes this oscillation as "the perpetual contradiction in Kant's philosophy."[75] He remarks:

> It will always stand out as a marvel how the Kantian philosophy recognized the relation of thought to sensible reality, beyond which it did not advance, as only a relation of mere appearance, yet perfectly well recognized and enunciated a higher unity of both in the idea in general . . . and yet stopped short at this relative relation and the assertion that the concept is and remains utterly separate from reality. *Thus it asserted as truth what it declared to be finite cognition, and denounced as an unjustified extravagance and mere figment of thought what it recognized as truth* . . .[76]

He continues his polemic against Kant's claim that thought and being are radically different and that universals are merely formal and empty. The claim

[73] *Aesthetics*, 1. 120. [74] *SL* 590.
[75] *LHP* 3. 471; *Werke*, 20. 381. See also *EL* §60R.
[76] *SL* 592; emphasis added; for a parallel but earlier formulation of the issue, cf. *FK* 89–90.

that universals are empty and formal flows from the separation of thought and being on which Kant insists in such doctrines as the distinction between phenomena and unknowable things in themselves (*noumena*), and his distinction of the subjective necessity of thought from the objective necessity of things. This separation of thought from being limits cognition to what is empirically given and it implies skepticism about reason and metaphysics. Kant's skepticism is like Hume's, directed against thought and intellectual intuition, not against empirical intuitions.[77]

However, the fundamental assertion of transcendental idealism, that reason is incapable apprehending unconditioned things-in-themselves, violates Kant's own concept of truth as the agreement of thought with its object by making such agreement impossible. Moreover, if the separation of thought and being implicit in the phenomena–noumena doctrine and in the doctrine of transcendent ideas is granted, the result is the same, because "an agreement essentially requires two terms".[78] Hegel points out that, in the doctrine of a priori synthesis of the concept, Kant possessed "a higher principle in which a duality in a unity could be cognized, a cognition of what is required for truth; but the material of sense, the manifold of intuition was too strong for him . . . "[79]

The transcendental dimension of Kant's project no less requires a broader and richer conception of thought—that is, that thought overgrasps being, such that being is inseparable from thought.[80] From this flows a quite different doctrine of thought and the universal— namely, as comprehending not only the genus but also specific differences and specific determinatenesses. "If one would but reflect attentively on the meaning of this fact, one would see that *differentiation* must be regarded as an equally essential moment of the concept."[81] In other words, the speculative view of the concept is that it is not an empty form awaiting empirical intuitive filling, but rather is non-formal, concrete in itself, and includes both identity and difference. This differentiation implies that existence is *other* than the concept, as Kant claims. However, this otherness, Hegel adds, is also *a self-specification of the concept*.[82] As we will see, Hegel's defense of the ontological argument turns on the claim that thought and being can be neither simply identified nor simply separated. If this is true, they must be related, and, as the *Logic* demonstrates, speculative dialectical thought is capable of comprehending both the difference between being and thought, and their identity.

[77] Ancient skepticism turned against experience from the beginning and therefore in Hegel's view is more authentic than modern skepticism because it is more radical. See Hegel's essay "On the Relationship of Skepticism to Philosophy" in *BKH*.

[78] *SL* 594. [79] *SL* 594. [80] *EL* §24Z. [81] *SL* 589. [82] *LPR* 1. 437.

5. BEYOND SKEPTICISM AND DOGMATISM: MEDIATED IMMEDIACY

According to Fichte, a first principle can be neither defined nor proven.[83] For the terms used to define or prove it undermine its claims to be a *first* principle, that on which everything else depends, and rather make it appear derivative. Further, Fichte acknowledges a plurality of first principles: idealism and materialism, each of which claims to refute the other provided that its first principle be granted. But which to choose? The choice of a first principle cannot be theoretically decided, but only practically decided. The choice of a first principle depends on what sort of human being one is and what one's fundamental interests are. Fichte's choice is idealism because in it freedom is the fundamental interest.

Hegel criticizes Fichte's idealism because it asserts its *Grundsatz* or principle immediately—to wit, it is "a pure assertion which does not comprehend its own self nor can it make itself comprehensible to others. . . . Not until reason comes on the scene as a reflection from [an] opposite certainty does its affirmation . . . present itself not merely as. . . . an assertion, but as truth . . . "[84] The identity of thought and being cannot be asserted immediately without lapsing into dogmatism. Dogmatism calls forth skepticism with its equipollence objections: one barren assurance is as good as another. Neither Fichte nor the early Schelling resolves the metacritical problem, and remains caught in the antithesis of dogmatism and skepticism. Hegel is neither a dogmatist nor a skeptic; there is a third alternative.

As Giacomo Rinaldi has pointed out, Hegel has a "brilliant solution" to the classical logical problem of the immediacy of the foundations of knowledge.[85] The foundation of knowledge must be immediate in some sense, because anything that is mediated is dependent on some other, and thus is relative to some other. As such it cannot be foundational because it turns out to be a result or consequence of something else that mediates it. On the other hand, if it is true that the truth is the whole, then it is evident that a purely immediate knowledge of the whole, such as Schelling's intellectual intuition, is no less one-sided and abstract. What it abstracts from is precisely its own mediation that is suppressed or forgotten, and which functions as an uncritically accepted presupposition. The dilemma is that a first principle or foundation can be neither simply immediate (because if it is abstract it is a dogmatism that succumbs to skeptical equipollence objections) nor simply mediate (because then it is dependent on an other and cannot be absolute or foundational). This means that philosophy cannot begin with its absolute; rather it must begin

[83] Fichte, First Introduction to *Wissenschaftslehre*, §1.
[84] *PhS* §234. [85] *HILH* 15.

with something *other* than the absolute—that is, the category of abstract being[86]—and then seek to explicate the absolute by showing its systematic development—that is, mediation, from its abstract beginning. This has implications for understanding the absolute: "Of the absolute it must be said that it is essentially a result, that only in the end is it what it truly is; and that precisely in this consists its nature, to be actual, subject, the spontaneous becoming of itself."[87] Hegel's absolute is both immediate and mediated—to wit, a self-mediated immediacy; it repulses itself from itself, opposes itself, and negates its opposition and returns to itself as a self-mediated immediacy and totality.

Hegel rejects both sides of the above dilemma: "there is nothing, nothing in heaven or in nature, spirit or anywhere else which does not equally contain both immediacy and mediation, so that these two determinations reveal themselves to be both unseparated and inseparable and the opposition between them to be a nullity."[88] Hegel clarifies this point in the concept of the concept in the *Logic*:

> Now although it is true that the concept is to be regarded not merely as a subjective presupposition, but as the absolute foundation, yet it can be so only insofar as it has *made* itself the foundation. Abstract immediacy is no doubt a *first*; yet in so far as it is *abstract*, it is, on the contrary *mediated*, and therefore if it is to be grasped in its truth its foundation must first be sought. Hence this foundation, though indeed an immediate, must have made itself immediate through the sublation of mediation.[89]

According to Giacomo Rinaldi "the real's systematic totality can attain its adequate self-consciousness only in a thought that is at the same time both immediacy and mediation—in an intuition *containing within itself* the moments of discursus, or in *an immediacy which is not original but rather makes itself immediate by sublating a previous (necessary) moment of mediation*."[90] A mediated immediacy sublates a prior necessary moment of mediation, and thus makes itself immediate; that is, the concept divides itself, posits itself in contradiction and otherness, and sublates the contradiction. In sublating its other, it flows together with and concresces with itself in its other. While the concept is self-mediating, self-mediation is not a return to an original unity or abstract universality or abstract self-relation.[91] That would be abstract identity or monism. Rather, self-mediation involves a self-specifying, articulated whole that both maintains itself in its opposition and is enriched by the difference

[86] According to Hegel, being and nothing can neither be identified nor separated and hence must be related. Becoming is the term that unites them. Thus becoming is the first *concrete* thought, and being and nothing are abstractions from it (*EL* §88Z).

[87] *PhS* §20. [88] *SL* 68; cf. *EL* §12.

[89] *SL* 577; emphasis added. [90] *HILH* 15.

[91] "Sublated contradiction is not abstract identity, for that is only one side of the opposition" (*EL* §119, Z2; cf. §121Z).

and serious otherness that opposition requires. In concluding with itself in its other, it is enriched by the difference that difference and opposition make:

> The result of the process of cognition is the reestablishing of the unity *enriched by difference*; and this gives the third form of the absolute idea. This last stage of the logical process proves at the same time to be what is genuinely first, and what is only through itself.[92]

Since the absolute idea is a mediated immediacy, it is the result of its own self-mediation. In the beginning of the *Logic*, being is abstract, indeterminate, conceptless, the opposite of the idea. And the absolute idea is an apparent result that appears dependent on and derivative from its conditions. However, the absolute idea, although the result of mediation, is not for that reason simply or one-sidedly derivative. It concludes with itself in its other in a mediation that sublates the mediation. Hegel describes this as follows:

> Concluding with itself in this way .... by means of its difference and through the sublation of this difference, the concept is the realized concept, i.e., it is the concept that contains the positedness of its determinations within its being-for-itself. It is the idea for which, being what is absolutely first (in the method), this end is at the same time only the vanishing of the semblance that the beginning is something immediate, and that the idea is a result.[93]

Thus the *Logic* starts with something *other* than the absolute idea—to wit, abstract being in its immediacy and indeterminacy. Being is not yet the absolute idea, but only the idea in potentiality. Nevertheless being possesses an immanent drive (*Trieb*) towards self-realization that is at the same time self-transformation. The result of this development is the absolute idea, which is the final cause, or the system as totality.

The absolute idea appears to be the result and hence derivative from and mediated by its antecedents. But this is not the case. As final cause it maintains itself in its operation by negating and positing its antecedent terms and conditions from which it appears to have resulted.[94] The idea sublates its own mediation; its self-mediation is a mediation that sublates mediation. That is, what appears as a result or consequence is at the same time the absolute ground of the starting point, so that the position of the two is reversed: "what appears as the consequence shows itself to be the ground, while what presented itself [initially] as the ground, is reduced to the status of consequence."[95] Their union is a concrescence, a synthesis and reciprocal communion of the moments of the concept as syllogism and self-maintaining totality.[96]

In Hegel's analysis, being—the apparent starting point of the logical method—turns out to be posited by and dependent on the self-determining self-realizing

[92] *EL* §215Z. [93] *EL* §242R. [94] *EL* §§192, 204, 213–14.
[95] *EL* §36Z. [96] *EL* §§181–2.

absolute idea.[97] As the final, all-inclusive stage of the logical process, the absolute idea converts every apparent other into its own self-relation and self-mediation, and thus proves at the same time to be not only the ultimate context or the whole, but also that which is genuinely and objectively first, that which is in itself and through itself.[98] The absolute idea—as the necessary unity of concept and reality—not only is the final category and whole of the logic, but as such is also the basis of the reversal of the initial immediate starting point (abstract being) and the mediated character of the absolute idea as dependent result. By positing its presuppositions, the absolute idea negates and sublates their immediacy and in so doing proves itself to be a self-mediated immediate totality. The absolute idea, as the true beginning, maintains itself throughout the logical process, and operates vis-à-vis its logical antecedents and conditions as final causality. Here final causality is not the external means/end sort, but rather the self-maintenance of the articulated whole.[99] In philosophical language, the logic demonstrates that the rational is actual and that substance is subject. In theological language, final causality means that the power of the absolute idea is not blind fate or sheer force, but rather persuasive power. The telos of the system is freedom—being at home with oneself in one's other as expressed in the absolute idea as the unity of concept and reality; theologically expressed, God is spirit in God's community.[100] In this way Hegel wants to renew ontotheology as a doctrine of *absolute spirit*.

[97] *EL* §§241–2. [98] *EL* §§214-5Z. [99] *ILH* 267.

[100] In the *Philosophy of Right* Hegel expresses the point thus: "that the content of right should no longer be apprehended merely in its subjective concept, and consequently that the ineligibility of the human being in and for himself for slavery should no longer be apprehended merely as something that ought to be, is an insight that comes only when we recognize that the idea of freedom is truly present only in the state" (*PR* §57R). The claim that humans are ineligible for slavery is for Hegel grounded ultimately in the Christian religion—to wit, reconciliation with God that is "achieved in and for itself absolutely . . . in God as the absolute unity. . . . This is opposed to the merely moral standpoint of Kant and Fichte . . . " (*LPR* 1. 349). Reconciliation is a communal concept rather than an individualistic–moral one. In reconciliation, "absolute spirit itself must be present, or its absolute, perfect freedom, the consciousness of its . . . inward infinity, or of free and perfect personality. . . . it is infinite subjectivity, [in which] the subject possesses absolute, infinite value on its own account, being conscious that it is the absolute object of the infinite love of God" (*LPR* 1. 351–2).

2

Recasting the Proofs as Elevation to God

1. INTRODUCTION: ELEVATION AS THE FACT OF RELIGION

In his lectures on the theological proofs, Hegel observes that the traditional proofs have been discredited to such an extent that it is not merely this or that proof, but rather the very attempt to prove God itself. "The impossibility of such proof is a generally accepted opinion."[1] This opinion is part of the discrediting of traditional natural theology as a special branch of metaphysics. It is a widely held view that Hegel accepted both Kant's refutation and his denial of the value of the proofs when he recast them as elevations of spirit to God. This interpretation implies that Hegel accepted their discreditation as a given that he incorporated into his recasting of the proofs as elevation. In this interpretation, Hegel's recasting of the proofs is similar to Kant's postulates—that is, possessing only subjective necessity and without objective significance. No one asks, if the proofs are merely subjective, devoid of objective theological and philosophical significance, mere debris left over from the collapse of metaphysics, why Hegel went to the trouble to recast them. What good does it do to recast a discredited proof as something merely subjective? Would not such an undertaking amount to a worthless redundancy?

This interpretation of Hegel's recasting is not only mistaken, but fails to appreciate Hegel's actual position: which is that the proofs fail owing to defects in their form, not because they lack rational content: "we are mistaken when we suppose that, because their form is attacked, the proofs of God's existence have become antiquated with respect to their content. But the content is, of course, not presented in its purity."[2] Hegel's recasting of the proofs begins by uncovering and identifying their true content. For it is this true content that not only invited attempts at proofs in the first place, but also that illumines defects and distortions inherent in the traditional forms of the proofs. Hegel's concern is to strip away the distortions and formal defects introduced by

[1] *LProofs*, 38. [2] *LPR* 1. 420 n. 122.

classical metaphysics, and restore the proofs to their proper significance as the elevation of spirit to God. Hegel's claim is that by its own immanent necessity and logic, the elevation of spirit to God is a philosophical theology.

Hegel maintains that what the traditional proofs assume but fail to express adequately is the elevation of subjective spirit to absolute spirit or God: "What this nexus contains when we strip away the form of demonstration is the elevation to God, and the proofs are nothing more than a description of the self-elevation to God."[3] Grasping this point is essential, because it allows the identification and correction of the defects and other respects in which the traditional proofs and their metaphysics are not only obsolete, but distortions of religion itself:

> It is this elevation of *the thinking spirit* to that which is itself the highest thought, to God, that we . . . wish to consider. This elevation is, moreover, essentially rooted in *the nature of our spirit*. It is *necessary* to it, and it is this necessity that we have before us in this elevation. The portrayal of this necessity is nothing other than what we call proof. Therefore, *we* do *not* have to prove the elevation from an outside perspective; it proves itself i*n itself*, and this means . . . that it is by its very nature necessary. We only have to describe and follow its own process, and, since it is a necessary process, we have therein the necessity itself, *insight* into the nature of which has to be furnished and secured by proof.[4]

To be sure, Hegel's project is also influenced by Kant. Recall that, despite his rejection of the proofs, Kant believes that the cosmological proof is the most plausible. Kant observes that the cosmological proof, which begins with the common experience of existence as contingent, judges contingent being to be non-self-sufficient, and spontaneously infers that there must be some necessary being that is its ground and cause. In reasoning thus, the cosmological argument simply follows and codifies what Kant calls "the natural procedure of human reason,"[5] whereby humans are "led, not by reflection and profound speculation, but simply by the natural bent of the common understanding,"[6] to the "absolutely necessary." Hegel agrees with Kant that the traditional proofs follow a pre-theoretical, pre-conscious instinctual reason, a natural logic that operates according to its own immanent necessity. Kant writes:

> The cosmological proof . . . enters upon a course of reason which, whether rational or only pseudo-rational, is at any rate *natural*, and the *most convincing not only for common sense but even for speculative reason*. It also sketches the first outline of all the proofs in natural theology, an outline *which has always been and always will be followed* . . .[7]

[3] *LPR* 1. 419.
[4] *LProofs*, 44, translation modified; emphasis both added and in original.
[5] *First Critique*, A586/B614, p. 497.
[6] *First Critique*, A590/B618, p. 499.
[7] *First Critique*, A604/B632; emphasis added.

However, despite his acknowledgment of this spontaneous natural logic, Kant regards it as metaphysical illusion that has been unmasked by critical reason. Kant dismisses this natural logic as sophistic, wherein speculative reason uses all its dialectical skill to produce the greatest possible transcendental illusion. Kant's critical doctrine asserts that reason both demands the unconditioned and yet cannot think it.[8] When reason attempts to think the infinite, it falls into antinomies—symptoms of metaphysical illusion.

Nevertheless, Kant treats religion as a postulate of morality, complete with a God-postulate valid for practical purposes. What Kant gets right, in Hegel's view, is that the proofs express a spontaneous, pre-theoretical natural reasoning that is the elevation of spirit to God. Hegel accepts this elevation as the starting point of a philosophical theology, but only the starting point.[9] However, Kant undermined this starting point with his postulate doctrine and his doctrine of regulative ideas. The subjective necessity and form of the postulate contradicts the content of the theological postulate.[10]

Moreover, Kant's attack on theology and the traditional proofs is in Hegel's eyes only partially successful. While Kant's critical philosophy put an end to metaphysics as an objective dogmatism, nevertheless by its uncritical acceptance of the traditional logical categories, it transformed objective dogmatism of metaphysics into a subjective dogmatism. Thus Kant continued the dogmatic metaphysics of the understanding within the framework of critical idealism, restricting the latter cognitively to finitude. Kant failed to criticize, much less correct, the categorical defects of traditional metaphysics; instead he continued them and made matters worse—namely, by adding an "absolute restriction of reason to the form of finitude, an injunction never to forget the absoluteness of the subject in every rational cognition. . . . In this situation philosophy cannot aim at the cognition of God, but only at what is called the cognition of man."[11] As a result, in Hegel's view, Kant's "criticism of the proofs is . . . inadequate on its own account, and in addition Kant failed to recognize their deeper foundation [in religious elevation] and so was unable to do justice to their true content."[12]

Hegel believes that Kant failed to understand religion, and thus failed to appreciate, much less do justice to, the natural logic inherent in religious elevation and praxis. The elevation is rooted in the nature of the human spirit; the spontaneous natural logic is not illusion, superstition, or a mental illness.[13] Stanley Rosen puts Hegel's point this way:

[8] *Commentary*, 534 ff. [9] *E.* §552. [10] *FK* 95.
[11] *FK* 64–5. [12] *LProofs*, 163.
[13] On Hegel's view of dementia, cf. Daniel Berthold-Bond, *Hegel's Theory of Madness* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1995). On the "nature" in natural logic, it should be noted here that Hegel points out the ambiguity in the terms "nature" and "natural." On the one hand, these can mean a natural sensibility that is irrational, pre-civilized, e.g., "the state of nature for humanity is not yet a condition of freedom but the condition of wrong" (*Lectures on Natural*

> for Hegel "logic is the life of thinking, not its taskmaster. Hegel employs a more brutal metaphor. Logic is today a method external to the sciences, by which we are supposed to learn how to think, 'as if one should first learn to digest and move one's bowels by studying anatomy and physiology' . . . Hegel does not wish to abolish traditional or formal logic. He wishes to exhibit the pattern intrinsic to the development of thinking of the whole. The whole is an organic unity; it cannot be captured by analysis into rigid and lifeless structures."[14]

Hegel describes the elevation thus:

> This process is the process of our spirit; it brings itself about unconsciously within our spirit; but philosophy is having the consciousness of it . . . the genuine other of the finite is the infinite, and this is not a bare negation of the finite but is affirmative . . . That is the quite simple consideration involved here.[15]

The elevation is the fact of religion.[16] This fact is what invites to proof in the first place, by pre-delineating the path inquiry and proof must take, giving rise to explicitly reflective, rational inquiry.[17] However, elevation possesses its own intrinsic necessity, and comprehension of this necessity is what transforms the fact of religion into a fact of spirit. This immanent necessity has to be described, interpreted, and understood.

Hegel claims that at several points traditional metaphysics and the proofs are defective because of the introduction of concepts that distort the elevation—that is, dualism, the abstract universal, abstract identity exclusive of difference and negation, and abstract transcendence. These concepts have resulted in the discrediting of the classical proofs and in distortions of religion itself. Hegel's project is to gain insight into the elevation, uncover and understand its immanent necessity and logic, correct the reflective distortions and categories

Right 1817–19, trans. M. Stewart and P. C. Hodgson (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995), 52, 321). These can also mean a nature religion that holds natural powers (Poseidon) or animals (the cow, the bull Apis, or birds) to be sacred. On the other hand, "nature" can also mean what is cultivated and rational, e.g., when we speak of the nature of things, it is their intelligible, rational nature (*Wesen*, essence) that is meant. The difference between the two senses for Hegel is located in the consciousness of freedom and right as constitutive of personhood, whose principle, although not always explicit, is universality. Hegel comments: "When we speak of sound human understanding or of natural feeling, *we always have in mind a cultivated spirit*. We forget that the ethical or the right that is found in the human breast is the product of cultivation and education . . . only then do religion and ethical life become immediate knowledge for us" (*LHP 1825–6*, 3. 206; emphasis added).

[14] *HSL* 31; *KL* 626–30.

[15] *LPR* 1. 423. I have altered the order of the sentences.

[16] *LProofs*, 94, 96. Hegel reflects Kant's term "fact of reason," which was restricted to practical reason, freedom, and the moral law. Hegel credits Kant with correctly determining the locus of the God question in practical reason. but criticizes his doctrine of the postulates, including God as a postulate of morality. *E.* §552. The fact of religion includes divine–human *relation*, a relation of spirit to spirit. *E.* §554.

[17] *LProofs*, 95.

of classical metaphysics that are uncritically assumed in Kant's philosophy, and reformulate the elevation in his speculative philosophy of religion.

2. PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION DISPLACES NATURAL THEOLOGY

Traditional natural theology considered God as the highest being in abstract separation from the world and from religion itself. In contrast, Hegel claims that the doctrine of God—including theological proofs—has its proper context in religion, but religion understood as a domain of absolute spirit. Thus recast, the doctrine of God is no longer a doctrine of the abstract highest being, the abstract universal, separated from the world in abstract transcendence, but rather the object and correlate of religion.[18] So understood, God is neither abstract transcendence (*Jenseits*), nor is theology a postulate of morality, nor is God a projection of religious consciousness reducible to anthropology.[19] Instead, Hegel claims that the relation of finite spirit to divine spirit is the substantial core of what religion is about.

> We have to acknowledge the truth implicit in the modern practice of not considering God in isolation from subjective spirit. But we do not do so for the reason that God is . . . unknown, but only because God is essentially spirit, is God as knowing spirit. Thus there is a relation of spirit to spirit. *This relationship of spirit to spirit lies at the basis of religion.*[20]

As a relation of spirit to spirit, religion proceeds from both sides of the relation:

> Religion, as this supreme sphere may be generally designated, has to be considered as proceeding from the subject and having its home in the subject, but equally as issuing objectively from the absolute spirit which is spirit in its community.[21]

Questions concerning divine immanence or divine transcendence are questions that explore aspects of the relation of spirit to spirit and to the whole, or community in which God is apprehended as its spirit. For this reason, Hegel proposes recasting the proofs as forms of communal religious praxis—that is, the elevation of subjective spirit to absolute spirit or God.[22]

[18] *LPR* 1. 116. [19] *LProofs*, ch. 9, pp. 90–1.
[20] *LPR* 1. 383 n.; emphasis added. [21] *E.* §554.
[22] Hegel at one point attempted to organize the whole history of religion in terms of the mode of elevation of spirit to absolute spirit reflected in the three proofs. The ontological proof he always associated both historically and conceptually with Christianity. This left him with the cosmological and teleological proofs for all others, e.g., assigning the teleological to Greek religion as religion of beauty (but also Roman religion as expediency) and the cosmological with Judaism. As an organizing principle of the history of religion this proved to be far too

This recasting of the proofs as elevation is both related to and yet different from the traditional theological proofs. While it is true that the cosmological proof, the teleological proof, and what Hegel calls the elevation of spirit all have a starting point, a mediation, and an end, their starting points, mediations, and points of arrival are distinct. The cosmological proof starts with observed mundane contingency and infers God as the corresponding necessary ground and power. The teleological proof starts with observed order and design, and infers that God's action and power are purposive, exhibiting divine wisdom. However, it is difficult to see how the ontological proof, which starts with the concept of God and infers God's existence from God's concept, fits into the elevation scheme. To be sure, the *concept* of God is a starting point for the question of God's existence, but the proof says nothing about an elevation of subjective spirit. This is why Walter Jaeschke asserts that the ontological proof does not depict an elevation to God.[23] However, this does not necessarily dispose of the matter entirely, if only because of Hegel's remark about the continued fascination of and interest in the proof despite its repeated "refutations": "Every attempt to look down upon the so-called ontological proof . . . is futile, since this proof is implicit in every unprejudiced human mind, just as the proof keeps coming back in every philosophy, even against its wit and will . . . "[24] In other words, the subject of the proof—the concept of which is derived from reflective consideration of the features a religiously adequate object (being) must possess—is itself an expression of a rational demand for the unconditioned—that is, the greatest conceivable being.[25]

Moreover, while it may not depict the starting point of elevation, the ontological proof *could* depict the logical features of the end and goal of elevation as the religiously adequate "object"—to wit, absolute actuality and necessity, the end that is the true beginning.[26] As we will see, even though the ontological proof is not treated in Hegel's incomplete manuscript on the proofs, nevertheless Hegel does show that the self-sublation of finitude is mediated by (dependent on) absolute necessity, and that absolute necessity, as a subordinate phase of the true infinite, is qualified in such a way that it does not simply annihilate finitude, but rather preserves and validates it.[27]

narrow and Hegel abandoned this proposal. For this complex issue, cf. *LPR* 2: 390 n. 409. Walter Jaeschke criticizes Hegel's lack of conceptual grounding of the *LPR*: cf. *RR* 229–43, 265–77.

[23] *RR* 257. [24] *EL* §93R; my translation. [25] See Ch. 3, n. 23.

[26] This would indeed contrast with a merely subjective extension of the elevation into what Kant calls a *focus imaginarius* and Hegel describes as an empty *Jenseits*, a space that for us is empty. *First Critique*, A644–5; *LPR* 1. 192. The term *focus imaginarius* is a geometric analogy or metaphor for the regulative, as contrasted with the constitutive function of the ideas of reason. Hegel believes that, when religion is reduced to such merely subjective interpretations, the result is the destruction of the object of religion even within the cultus; deprived of its object, the cultus shrivels up into mere feelings. *LPR* 1. 192–3.

[27] *LPR* 2. 258; cf. *EL* §158Z: "The highest independence of the human being is to know itself as utterly ordained by the absolute idea; this is the consciousness and attitude that Spinoza calls

The difference of the elevation from the traditional proofs is evident in the qualification of absolute necessity: instead of being the nemesis of finite freedom, absolute necessity is the ground of finite freedom that liberates (one) from all finite dependencies. As Spinoza demonstrated, absolute necessity possesses spiritual significance. The starting point of the elevation also differs from the proofs. The proofs start with an observed cosmological feature. But the elevation starts with finite spirit itself: "the true concrete empirical material is neither being (as in the cosmological proof) nor purposive activity (as in the physico-teleological proof), but *spirit* itself, the absolute characteristic and function of which is effective reason, i.e., the self-determining and self-realizing concept itself—Freedom."[28] Hegel alludes to this point—spirit's transcendence of nature and natural teleologies—when he writes concerning the starting point of the elevation:

> the concept is not simply submerged in objectivity, as it is when, as end, it is merely the determination of things. Rather the concept is *for itself*, existing independently of objectivity. Regarded in this way, *it is itself the starting point*, and its transition has a distinctive determination of its own . . .[29]

The ending point of the elevation is the object of religion, conceived in the shape of the ontological proof—namely: "The object of religion *is* simply through itself and on its own account; it is the absolutely final end in and for itself, the absolutely free being. Here our concern about the final end can have no other final end than this object itself . . . *In its concern with this object, spirit frees itself from all finitude*."[30] This liberation from finitude has implications that are both conceptual–spiritual and theological: "God *is* only in and for thought. Consequently, *only human being has religion essentially* . . . by means of thought human being distinguishes itself from the animal and therefore has religion."[31]

Further, while Hegel concedes to Kant that the proofs are formally defective, this is not Hegel's only point or even his main point. Rather his point is that the traditional proofs—which belong to the metaphysics of the understanding—are defective primarily because their categories, as finite, distort what the proofs are about—namely, the *fact of religion* as the elevation of spirit to God.[32] In Hegel's estimation, the content and end of elevation itself is that which invites proof, and remains valid despite the formal defects; it

amor intellectualis Dei." In *LProofs*, Hegel has an interesting discussion of the spiritual significance of absolute necessity in Ancient Greek Fate piety, which dispenses with reconciliation, yet is able to find some satisfaction in necessity. *LProofs*, 108–9; 130–1; cf. *EL* §147Z. See Ch. 6, Sect. 8.

[28] *E.* §552R.
[29] *LProofs* 100; emphasis added. It is the end that is the true beginning.
[30] *LPR* 1. 150; emphasis added.
[31] *LPR* 1. 209; emphasis in original.
[32] *LProofs*, 94.

must be rescued and salvaged from its distortions, not the least of which is the "bogus" view that finite and infinite are mutually exclusive and separated—that is, metaphysical dualism. In elevation, the starting point of which is subjective spirit, spirit undergoes self-transformations that include its self-sublation (*Aufhebung*)—that is, both negation and affirmation/preservation on a higher level. This self-negating and self-sublating vital activity of spirit in the elevation finds no place in traditional syllogisms.

> The moment of the negative is not found in the form taken by the syllogism of the understanding, and therefore the latter is defective in the region of the living reason of spirit—in the region wherein absolute necessity itself is considered as the true result, as something that does indeed mediate itself through an other, but mediates itself with itself by sublating the other.[33]

The syllogism of the understanding levels its terms by requiring them to be commensurate, and permitting no movement or equivocation of sense. Moreover, it takes each term as an atom externally related to the other terms. Connecting the terms is, of course, what the syllogism is supposed to do, but this connecting is regarded as a question of the validity of the argument *form*, and not a matter of the content—although, to be sure, the premisses/terms, and so on, are supposed to be independently true. For Hegel, the formal syllogism of traditional logic and the understanding is an empty framework filled with sensibly given content and thus restricted to finitude, which for it amounts to an absolute barrier.

Since spirit undergoes self-negation and transformation in the elevation to God, this dialectic poses problems for the traditional syllogism:

> For this dialectical nature of the finite and its expression, the form of the syllogism of the understanding has no place. It is not in a position to express its rational content; and since *religious elevation is the rational content itself*, it cannot find satisfaction in the form of the understanding, for *there is more in religious elevation than this form can grasp*.[34]

Religious elevation requires expression in a *dialectical syllogism* that sublates its terms and expresses the speculative teleology and immanent activity of the final cause or purpose, which "breaks through its own barrier and opens itself into objectivity by means of syllogism."[35] Moreover, "as is the case with all speculative process—this development of one thing out of another means that what appears to be a derivative result, is rather the *absolute prius* [or end] of that through which it appears to be mediated, and it is known in spirit as its truth."[36] For this reason Hegel claims that "this elevation is intrinsically

[33] *LProofs*, 114. [34] Hegel, "Fragment on the Cosmological Proof," in *LProofs*, 163.
[35] *EL* §192.
[36] *E.* §552; my translation. This passage in §552 is ambiguous in that it may be read as asserting that the point of departure for the elevation from finite to infinite is objective spirit.

necessary, more than some sort of accidental fact relating to spirit . . . In order that this fact may be rightly comprehended as a *fact of spirit*, and not of the ephemeral and contingent spirits, it is requisite to grasp it in its necessity. *Only this necessity vouches for its rightness in this contingent and arbitrary sphere.*"[37] The fact of religion, rightly comprehended as a fact of spirit, entails "the fact of transition from finite to infinite."[38] In other words, there is no fixed unbridgeable gulf between finite and infinite. Nor is the religious relation constituted one-sidedly from subjective spirit, because "God is not jealous," but rather self-communicating.[39]

3. KANT'S ATTACK ON THE PROOFS

Hegel's *Lectures on the Proofs for the Existence of God* appears to have started with Hegel's "Fragment on the Cosmological Proof."[40] Here he discusses most fully Kant's treatment of the proof. Kant's attack on the proofs is part of his critique of traditional metaphysics, including theology as a special metaphysics, for reasons that flow from his principal doctrine that human cognition is limited and restricted to finitude. Kant famously writes "human reason has this peculiar fate that in one species of its knowledge it is burdened by questions which, as prescribed by the very nature of reason itself, it is not able to ignore, but which, as transcending all its powers, it is also not able to answer."[41] Nowhere is this fate more evident than in the proofs for the existence of God. Despite his rejection of the proofs, Kant believes that the cosmological proof is the most plausible, when viewed from the perspective of the natural spontaneous procedure of reason.

Kant observes that the cosmological proof, which begins with the common experience of existence as contingent, judges contingent being to be non-self-sufficient, and spontaneously infers that there must be some necessary being that is its ground and cause. In reasoning thus, the cosmological argument simply follows and codifies what Kant calls "the natural procedure of human reason,"[42] whereby humans are "led, not by reflection and profound speculation, but

Walter Jaeschke criticizes this reading as too narrow. I agree with Jaeschke, because Hegel's differentiation of the concept of spirit into subjective, objective, and absolute does not mean that there are three separate spirits. Hegel repeatedly inveighs against quantitative numerical assumptions in treating spirit, e.g., counting spirit as a form of apprehension or analysis. Hegel rejects metaphysical atomism. I agree with Jaeschke that the elevation is based on spirit as such. For Hegel, spirit is a totality that involves relation, intersubjectivity, community, and, above all, cognition on all levels, including the domains of absolute spirit—art, religion, and philosophy.

[37] *LProofs*, 96. [38] *LProofs*, 94, 96, 121. [39] *LProofs*, 66–8; 123–5.
[40] *LProofs*, 147–68. [41] *First Critique*, Preface, A vii, p. 7.
[42] *First Critique*, A586/B614, p. 497.

simply by the natural bent of the common understanding,"[43] to the "absolutely necessary." Kant underscores that the cosmological proof follows and consists in "a course of reasoning which, whether rational or only pseudo-rational, is at any rate natural, and the most convincing not only for common sense, but even for speculative understanding."[44]

However, while Kant traces the origins of the cosmological argument to a natural tendency of the mind spontaneously to infer a necessary cause of the contingent world, when he shifts to the critical–reflective standpoint, he regards the argument itself as nothing but metaphysical illusion. "In this cosmological argument there are combined so many pseudo-rational principles that speculative reason seems in this case to have brought to bear all the resources of its dialectical skill to produce the greatest possible illusion."[45] Critical reason unmasks the transcendent illusion of metaphysical knowledge claims. It declares that concepts without intuitions are empty, and restricts the categories of reason to finitude for their valid cognitive employment. In this reduced form they are categories of the understanding that are restricted to thinking what is empirically given. Thus the category of causality is valid only in empirical employment; it becomes invalid when, as in the cosmological argument, it is extended to transcendent employment in thinking the relation between world and God.

Kant points out that the regress from the conditioned to its conditions requires the assumption of an infinite being that is unconditionally necessary. This unconditioned necessity is a problematic concept, about which Kant famously writes:

> Unconditioned necessity, which we so indispensably require as the last bearer of all things, is for human reason the veritable abyss. . . . We cannot put aside and yet also we cannot endure the thought that a being, which we represent to ourselves as supreme amongst all possible beings, should, as it were, say to itself: "I am from eternity to eternity, and outside me there is nothing save what is through my will, but whence then am I?" All support here fails us; and the greatest perfection, no less than the least perfection, is unsubstantial and baseless for the merely speculative reason, which makes not the least effort to retain either one or the other, and feels indeed no loss in allowing them to vanish entirely.[46]

The infinite regress from conditions to condition can be stopped only by *assuming* something absolutely necessary—but, given Kant's restriction of causality to empirical employment, the only permissible inference here is from something finite and conditioned to another something likewise finite and conditioned, a "spurious infinite." That is why Kant claims that the

[43] *First Critique* A590/B618, p. 499.
[44] *First Critique*, A604/B632, p. 508.
[45] *First Critique*, A606/B634, p. 509.
[46] *First Critique,* A613/B641. For Hegel's reply, see p. 68, n. 112.

cosmological proof has to fall back on the ontological proof to furnish it with the concept of the absolutely necessary. But the ontological proof—which reasons a priori from the concept of God to its existence—also fails. Kant dismisses the ontological argument as a mere scholastic trick (*Schulwitz*) that seeks to conjure existence out of mere concepts alone.[47] The result of Kant's critique of the cosmological and ontological proofs can be summarized thus: "I can never *complete* the regress to the conditions of existence save by *assuming* a necessary being, and yet am never in a position to *begin* with such a being."[48] As we shall see, Hegel thinks that Kant's posing of the theological problem in this way is indeed the point on which everything turns. But, before turning to this, we need to examine briefly Kant's treatment of theology in his *Second Critique*.

By showing that theoretical cognition must be restricted to thinking concepts corresponding to intuitions, Kant maintains that speculative reason is only a negative faculty of the infinite.[49] However, Kant reopens the God-question as a postulate of practical reason. Kant's thesis is that reason can be practical, that it can determine its own ends. Since reason can determine its own ends, it must be capable of realizing them: "ought" implies "can." Kant treats theology as a postulate of morality. God is a necessary postulate of moral striving; God is a need of reason; God is supposed to guarantee that the achievement of moral worth will be conjoined with happiness, or, negatively stated, that the moral duties reason commands are not impossible. Kant thus maintains that the consciousness of freedom mediated by the moral law opens access to the noumenal or supersensible realm, but only for practical purposes. Acting in accordance with the moral law, which Kant calls the "fact of reason," the human being has to assume that s/he can do what s/he ought to do. It is necessary to postulate God, not as the enforcer of morality or as the rewarder of moral action, but simply as the guarantor that what the rational moral law commands is possible. However, Kant qualifies this apparent cognition of the supersensible. The God postulate is not theoretical cognition of an object, but rather an object of moral faith, valid only for practical purposes. The certainty of moral faith is immediate, but the necessity of the postulate is subjective.

4. HEGEL'S CRITIQUE OF KANT'S UNDERSTANDING OF RELIGION

In Hegel's view, Kant fails to understand religion both in his treatment of it as a postulate of morality, and in his ambiguous treatment of what Kant himself

[47] *First Critique*, A603/B633. [48] *First Critique*, A616/B644. [49] *EL* §54Z.

calls the natural bent and disposition of the mind that spontaneously rises from the contingency of the world to the absolutely necessary. On the one hand, Kant regards this disposition and instinctual rise as a natural tendency, the most convincing for both common sense and speculative understanding. On the other hand, after acknowledging it, Kant critically dismisses this disposition of the mind as merely fictional, a merely subjective mixture of subjective psychology and a transcendent formal illusion devoid of content.

Hegel has a different view of the relation between human experience, ordinary language, and philosophy. Stanley Rosen remarks:

> Hegel was entirely opposed to the formalization of philosophy, and this includes his own science of logic. . . . Hegel does not detach the forms of argument from the motions or processes of conceptual thinking. His primary concern is to *describe these processes in language that itself exhibits the movements it describes*. . . . The attempt to formalize these processes would immediately suppress the dialectical movement that is the mark of the life of the spirit and transform it into the skeleton of a corpse.[50]

Some of the parallels between nature, vital natural processes, and Hegel's developmental logical holism to which Rosen calls attention are on display in the following passage. Hegel asserts that everything living produces and maintains itself by positing and resolving contradictions. Hegel describes these activities as the "idealism of life." Keep in mind that "Life" is both a category of Hegel's *Logic* and his philosophy of nature:

> For the power of life, and still more the might of the spirit, consists precisely in positing contradiction in itself, enduring it, and overcoming it. This positing and resolving of the contradiction between the ideal unity and the real separatedness of the members constitutes the constant process of life, and life *is* only by being a *process*.
>
> The process of life comprises a double activity: on the one hand, that of bringing steadily into existence perceptibly the real differences of all the members and specific characteristics of the organism, but, on the other hand, that of asserting in them their universal ideality (which is their animation) if they try to persist in independent severance from one another and isolate themselves in fixed differences from one another. *This is the idealism of life.* For *philosophy is not at all the only example of idealism*; *nature, as life, already makes a matter of fact what idealist philosophy brings to completion in its own spiritual field*.[51]

The contrast between Hegel and Kant can be summarized thus: for Hegel the task of philosophical cognition is to bring about the reconciliation of the reason that is conscious of itself with the reason that is actual in the world, to show that the rational is actual, that what is rational can endure contradiction

[50] *HSL* 4–5; *KL* 114–24; emphasis added. [51] *Aesthetics*, 1. 120.

and overcome it.[52] Kant's philosophy is a critical idealism in which reason has insight only into that which it produces after a plan of its own; it must not allow itself to be kept in nature's leading strings but must itself show the way, constraining nature to answer questions of reason's own determining.[53] In pursuit of this project Kant interprets teleology and organism not as objective phenomena of nature, but rather as subjective maxims of judgment that stand in opposition to another, equally subjective maxim of judgment—to wit, mechanism. However, while both mechanism and teleology are subjectively possible ways of viewing things, what the world is in itself remains unknowable. Hegel criticizes Kant's agnosticism for surrendering the principal question of philosophical interest, the truth question, and for interpreting contradiction—which, according to Hegel, moves the world[54]—as likewise subjective and pertaining only to human thought, not things themselves.[55]

Hegel has a different orientation from Kant towards the natural logic and spontaneous inclination of the mind to transcend the contingent, finite world—including itself—towards the absolutely necessary. This difference is on display in his "Fragment on the Cosmological Argument." Hegel argues that Kant fundamentally misunderstood the pre-theoretical spontaneously generated content that spirit outlines and that invites the endeavor of the cosmological proof. One reason for this is that Kant tends to treat metaphysics as illusion susceptible of merely subjective–psychological explanation, and another is that he accepts the categories of traditional metaphysics as givens and fails to subject them to criticism—that is, to take up the question whether they are true or capable of expressing truth.[56] Kant "leaves the traditional categories and methods of cognition uncontested."[57] Consequently,

> This [Kant's] philosophy made an end of the metaphysic of the understanding as an objective dogmatism, but in fact *it merely transformed it into a subjective dogmatism*, i.e., into a consciousness in which *these same finite determinations of the understanding persist*, and the question of what is true in and for itself has been abandoned.[58]

Kant's treatment of theology as a postulate of morality is further evidence for Hegel's charge that he misunderstands religion. The natural logic at work in religion is dismissed as sophistry, without truth. Consequently, religion is

[52] *EL* §6R. [53] *First Critique*, Bxiii. [54] *EL* §119Z.

[55] *SL* 738–9. Hegel acknowledges that one of Kant's great contributions is the retrieval of the concept of entelechy from Aristotle, which Kant unfortunately interprets as having merely subjective validity. On contradiction as an objective power "moving the world," cf. *EL* §119Z2.

[56] Cf. *EL* §§115–22 for examples of how Hegel pursues this question. Hegel criticizes Kant for seeking to know before you know, i.e., for separating the investigation of the categories from their actual employment. The result is empty formalism. Hegel overcomes Kant's separation and formalism by insisting that the activity of the categories, and the critique of them, must be united within the process of cognition (*EL* §41).

[57] *EL* §60R. [58] *LHP* 3. 428.

regarded here only from an external point of view—to wit, its potential usefulness to morality. Religion is treated only as a means to support morality by upholding its claim that the human being can do what it morally ought to do. However, for Kant even the God-postulate is only subjectively necessary, valid only for practical purposes, and does not involve any cognition of God.

Moreover, the God-postulate is incoherent. The form of the postulate, as subjective, stands in contradiction to its postulated content and vice versa.[59] This incoherence may not undermine the postulate for Kant's purposes, but it is nevertheless both philosophically and theologically problematic. Hegel observes that, if God were merely a postulate, God would have no being independent of the postulating consciousness.[60] On this view, the relation of human beings to God is one-sided; the religious relation is constructed and viewed from one side only. However, "a one-sided relationship is no relation at all. If in fact we are to understand by religion nothing more than a relationship on our part to God, then God is left without any independent existence. God would exist only in religion as something posited and produced by us."[61]

In contrast to Kant's theological agnosticism, Hegel points out that the expression "that God exists only in religion . . . does have the true and important meaning that *it belongs to the nature of God*, *in God's complete and self-sustaining independence*, to be for the human spirit, to communicate godself to humanity. This meaning is totally different from that previously referred to, in which God is only a postulate, a belief. God *is*, and gives godself in relationship to humans."[62]

Kant's attack on theology and the theological proofs has been influential. Hegel begins his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* with the acknowledgment that "the doctrine that we can know nothing of God . . . has become in our time a universally acknowledged truth, a settled thing, a kind of prejudice."[63] He adds: "It is no longer a grief to our age that it knows nothing of God; rather it counts as the highest insight that this cognition is not even possible."[64] Deprived of cognition of its object, "religion shrivels up into mere feeling, into a contentless elevation of spirit into the eternal, of which, however, it knows nothing and has nothing to say . . . "[65] In the modern post-Kantian world, religion is understood as an orientation toward God, "but only *toward* God . . . a shooting into the blue—which means that we know nothing

[59] Hegel asks, "Is it the identity of thought and being, of reason and its reality that is subjective? Or is it only the postulating of them? . . . It cannot be the content of the postulates that is subjective, for the negative content of the postulates suspends everything subjective" (*FK* 95). Note that, for Hegel, what is at stake is not only the content of religious belief, but the foundational principle of all philosophy—to wit, the identity of thought and being, as specified by the ontological argument. FK 68, 94.

[60] *LProofs*, 65–6. See also *FK* 95, 67–8.

[61] *LProofs*, 66.

[62] *LProofs*, 66; emphasis added.

[63] *LPR* 1. 86.

[64] *LPR* 1. 87.

[65] *LPR* 1. 103.

of God . . . we are oriented toward a place that for us is empty."[66] "God is not before us as an object of cognition. . . . Only our *relation* to God, or religion as such, is an object of inquiry for us. . . . Expositions of God's nature have become ever fewer."[67]

On the other hand, Hegel holds that "proving God turns out to be the summons to the philosophy of religion."[68] Indeed, Hegel's *Logic* and *Philosophy of Religion* are his response to this summons. As we turn to the *Philosophy of Religion*, it is important to debunk the familiar caricature that depicts Kant as the "critical philosopher" and Hegel as the "philosopher of system" whose philosophical theology allegedly lapses into pre-critical metaphysics. On the basis of this caricature, Hegel's philosophy of religion is where "Hegel's pre-critical lapse" supposedly becomes apparent and is read out of the system.[69] On the contrary, Hegel's *Philosophy of Religion* presupposes and extends Hegel's criticism of Kant's *Critique* for separating the forms and categories of knowledge from actual cognition. Kant assumes that cognition is an instrument. His instrumental metaphor for cognition determines critical philosophy as inquiry into the *instrument* of cognition prior to its use in actual cognition. Hegel asks, what is the cognitive status of critical inquiry itself?

> the faculty of cognition was to be investigated prior to the activity of cognition. This certainly involves the correct insight that the forms of thinking themselves must be made the object of cognition; but there soon creeps in the mistaken project of wanting to have cognition before we have any cognition, or of not wanting to go into the water before we have learned to swim. Certainly the forms of thinking should not be used without investigation, but *this process of investigation is itself a process of cognition*. So *the activity of the forms of thinking, and the critique of them, must be united within the process of cognition*. The forms of thinking . . . are the object and the activity of the object itself; they investigate themselves and they must determine their own limits and point out their own defects.[70]

[66] *LPR* 1. 191; emphasis added. [67] *LPR* 1. 163. [68] *LPR* 1. 137.

[69] See Kevin J. Harrelson, "Hegel and the Modern Canon," *Owl of Minerva*, 44/1–2 (2012–13), 1–35, see esp. 27–8. Harrelson points out the irony in recent analytic and non-metaphysical readings of Hegel, which construct a "neo-Kantian" Hegel, and banish his metaphysical works (the *Logic* and the Berlin Lectures on the *Philosophy of Religion*) as contrary to the true spirit of his philosophy. The irony is that the no-Kantian distinction between the anti-metaphysical "good Kant" (of the Transcendental Aesthetic and Analytic of the *First Critique)* and the "bad metaphysical Kant" (the transcendental dialectic, the *Second* and *Third Critiques*) was originally constructed in order to *exclude* Hegel from the canon of modern philosophy. The recent non-metaphysical Hegel interpretations unwittingly resemble the rhetorical tactics of the nineteenth-century "Back to Kant" movement, but for the *opposite* reason—they seek to fit Hegel *into* the same philosophical narrative that was *originally* used to *exclude* him from the canon.

[70] *EL* §41Z1. Cf. *LProofs*, 42–3. See also Williams, "Hegel's Critique of Kant," *Owl of Minerva*, 38 (2006–7), 9–34.

In his *Philosophy of Religion*, Hegel extends his correction of Kant, in light of the critical requirement that the inquiry into the forms and conditions of cognition not be separated from cognition itself.

> Reason is to be investigated—but how? It must be investigated rationally; it must be cognized. That is possible only through rational thinking, rational cognition. . . . To learn to swim one must go into the water. *One cannot make cognition into one's object without thereby behaving cognitively* at the same time. Here in the philosophy of religion it is more precisely God, or reason in principle, that is the object. God is essentially rational, a rationality that is alive and, as spirit, is in and for itself. *When we philosophize about religion, we are in fact investigating reason . . . only we do so without the supposition that we will get this over first, apart from our real object. Instead the cognition of reason is exactly the object, is what it is all about.* Spirit is just this: to be for itself, to be for spirit. This is what finite spirit is; and *the relationship of finite spirit or finite reason to infinite spirit or reason is engendered within religion itself and must be dealt with there.*[71]

Hegel's philosophy of religion implements his own critical demand that the forms of thinking, and the critique of them, must be united within the process of cognition. Kant's philosophy of religion, which includes God only as a subjective postulate of morality, lacks any engagement with or cognition of its putative object and thus fails this important requirement. This requirement also distinguishes Hegel's philosophy of religion from the former metaphysics and natural theology, where God is made into an abstract object or essence, treated in abstraction from religion.[72]

> To the extent that God is grasped as an essence of the understanding, God is not grasped as spirit. To the extent that God is grasped as spirit, however, this concept includes the subjective side within it . . . Our concern here . . . is not with God as such or as object, but with God as he is present in his community . . . God can only be genuinely understood in the mode of his being as spirit, by means of which he makes himself the counterpart of a community . . . "[73]

The philosophy of religion satisfies the critical requirement by focusing on the relation of finite spirit to infinite spirit as it is present within religion itself. It also means that for Hegel philosophy and religion have truth for their content, in the sense that God is the truth.[74] They share an identity of content but differ in the form and language in which it is expressed.

This does not mean that the philosophy of religion simply surrenders the truth question to theological authorities a priori.[75] On the contrary, the

[71] *LPR* 1. 138–9. [72] *LPR* 1. 115–19. [73] *LPR* 1. 116.

[74] *EL* §1 Both of them (philosophy and religion) have the truth in the highest sense of the term, as their object for both hold that God and God alone is the truth.

[75] Walter Jaeschke notes that Hegel's philosophy of religion is not to be understood as simply submitting to the verdict of a purely theological interpretation. All that finally matters for it is what is conceived: *RR* 288.

philosophy of religion is a dialectical critique of immediacy and representation that transforms these into concepts and seeks to develop the content of religion out of the concept. Hegel's philosophy of religion cannot simply repeat traditional theological doctrines, but must critically understand and where necessary transform them. As Walter Jaeschke observes: "Where Christianity is not in conformity to the concept of religion, it is not the concept that has to be corrected by [traditional] Christianity, but Christianity that has to be elevated to conceptual form."[76] Hegel's procedure combines both a hermeneutics of religious representations and a retrieval/reconstruction of their content that salvages it by developing it out of the concept. While the truth must be produced out of the concept, the philosophy of religion has to recognize this truth "as at the same time not produced, as the truth that subsists in and for itself."[77] This is an ontotheological concept of spirit and truth.

5. KANT'S INFLUENCE ON HEGEL: THE FACT OF REASON

Despite disagreements with Kant, Hegel acknowledges that Kant put his finger on something important—to wit, the God-question arises originally in and through practical reason taken in a broad sense, not speculative reason or physics.[78] Hegel recasts Kant's point this way: "The idea of God is known as free spirit only from and through ethical life. True religion and piety are sought in vain outside of ethical life and ethical spirit."[79] Similarly Hegel claims in his *Philosophy of Religion* that the concern is not with God as abstract object of natural theology, but with God as spirit present in his community, and that "the doctrine of God is be grasped and taught only as the doctrine of religion."[80]

The parallel between Hegel and Kant extends to the elevation of spirit to God. Hegel credits Kant with getting right the starting point of that elevation in the consciousness of freedom and practical reason. For Kant freedom and the unconditional moral law reciprocally imply each other.[81] The moral law is the *ratio cognoscendi* of freedom and freedom is the *ratio essendi* of the moral law, for only a free being can apprehend something that *ought* to be, wherein a human being judges that he can do something simply because he knows that

[76] *RR* 290. [77] *LPR* 3. 345, cited in *RR* 289.

[78] Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. Lewis W. Beck (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Library of Liberal Arts, Prentice-Hall, 1993), 145; hereafter cited as *Second Critique*.

[79] *EPS* §552. Although Kant correctly grasped the self-consciousness of freedom as the origin of the God-question and the starting point of the elevation of spirit to God, he undermined this discovery with his postulate doctrine.

[80] *LPR* 1. 116. [81] Kant, *Second Critique*, 6, 29.

he ought—a fact that without the moral law would have remained unknown to him.[82] "The consciousness of this moral law may be called a *fact of reason*, since one cannot ferret it out from antecedent data of reason, such as the consciousness of freedom (for this is not antecedently given) and since it forces itself upon us as a synthetic proposition a priori based on no pure or empirical intuition."[83] Further Kant asserts:

> The moral law is given as an apodictically certain fact, as it were of pure reason, a fact of which we are a priori conscious, even if it be granted that no example could be found in which it has been followed exactly. Thus the objective reality of the moral law can be proved through no deduction . . . Nevertheless it is firmly established of itself. . . . the moral [law] itself serves as a principle of the deduction of . . . freedom, which the moral law, itself in need of no justifying grounds, shows to be not only possible but actual in beings who acknowledge the law as binding upon them.[84]

For Kant the fact of reason is immediately grasped, but this immediacy means that the content of the fact of reason possesses only a subjective necessity, and thus lacks the "absolute objectivity that would get it recognized as the starting point of philosophy". . . . Instead Kant's fact of reason, as immediate and subjective, is the "point where philosophy terminates in faith."[85]

6. HEGEL'S FACT OF RELIGION AS ELEVATION OF SPIRIT TO GOD

Hegel does not analyze Kant's important but puzzling discussion of the fact of reason. But he does characterize Kant's primacy of the practical as the starting point of the ascent of spirit to God, and comments as follows: "we have the standpoint of absoluteness revealed, since there is an infinite disclosed within the human breast. The satisfying part in Kant's philosophy is that the truth is at least set within the human heart."[86] Hegel credits Kant with an important discovery of the starting point of elevation, if not the elevation of spirit to God itself—that is, of an approach to transcendence within immanence—but he complains that Kant's doctrine of the postulates compromised and undermined his own discovery.

> But Kant's account of this elevation reduces it again to a mere postulate, a mere *Sollen* or "ought." This is the previously explained distortion, namely the postulate retains the *antithesis* of finitude. But that very elevation of spirit to God suspends the [contradictory] form of the postulate and transforms it into truth.

[82] Kant, *Second Critique*, 30. [83] Kant, *Second Critique*, 31.
[84] Kant, *Second Critique*, 48–9. [85] *FK* 67. [86] *LHP* 3. 458.

> This elevation of subjective spirit to God must be recovered and restored to its truth and validity.[87]

Hegel's agenda is the recovery and restoration of the elevation of subjective spirit to God from its distortions in the traditional proofs, in Kant's practical philosophy, and Jacobi's immediate knowing; Hegel's agenda involves a correction of what Kant started, but failed to finish. Hegel will allow the elevation to sublate the subjective form of Kant's postulate—which contradicts its content—and this will allow the elevation of spirit to God to emerge in truth.

Hegel uses the term *Faktum* in his account of religion and the elevation of finite spirit. However, despite the use of the same term *Faktum*, Kant and Hegel are talking about different "facts"—to wit, morality and religion. Both "facts" have to do with freedom, but in different senses and domains. For Kant the fact of reason implies that the moral subject is essential and that the object of religion is relative to the ends of the moral subject—that is, a support and means to the end aimed at in moral action. Kant's view has been influential, even among some theologians. Hegel writes: "From Kant onward all religious faith has fallen within the view that I am the affirmative, the substantial, the essential, that which stands higher than all these [other] determinations."[88] For Hegel the fact of religion implies that the religious–theological object—the absolutely necessary—is essential, and the religious subject, as contingent finitude, is relative to its object. This means that religious praxis is a praxis of self-sublating finitude that achieves its stability and affirmativity—including its freedom and independence—in and through utter dependence on God. Hegel conceives this utter dependence as liberation from all finite ends. Hegel writes that "the highest independence of the human being is to know itself as utterly determined by the absolute idea; this is the consciousness and attitude that Spinoza calls *amor intellectualis dei*."[89]

Further, even if Kant's God-postulate were somehow plausible as a theological doctrine, it would be a theology of the *moral* god, the god of morality, even though Kant's God falls short of being either a lawgiver or the enforcer of morality. But, as far as Hegel is concerned, Kant's "fact of reason" is inextricably linked to the moral law, and thus is too narrow to serve as the fact of

[87] *E.* §552. Hans Friedrich Fulda emphasizes the importance of *E.* §§552–5 for a proper understanding of Hegel's concept of absolute spirit, which counters contemporary reductive and deflationary interpretations that collapse absolute spirit into objective spirit. Such readings view Hegel from within the Kantian frame—that Hegel explicitly calls into question. Cf. H. F. Fulda, "Hegels Begriff des absoluten Geistes," Walter Jaeschke and Ludwig Siep (eds), *Hegel-Studien* (Hamburg: Meiner, 2001), xxxvi. 167–98.

[88] *LPR* 1. 288.

[89] *EL* §158Z. Even Hegel's rival at Humboldt university, Friedrich Schleiermacher, could approve of this declaration. Cf. Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, trans. H. R. Macintosh (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1928, 1968), §§3–5, 32. On Hegel's difference from Schleiermacher, cf. *LPR* 2. 441–5. Utter dependence liberates from all finite dependence.

religion. Although religion undeniably has implications for freedom and ethics, religion itself is not reducible to morality. As we will see, for Hegel the fact of religion is only an abstract foundation that opens up a multiplicity of starting points for the elevation of spirit to God and thus invites a multiplicity of proofs, theologies, and religions. Hegel writes: "This elevation is the fact [*Faktum*] in the history of human spirit that constitutes religion, but religion only generally, i.e., wholly abstractly; thus the elevation of spirit is the general, but only general, foundation of religion."[90]

Hegel observes that Jacobi's principle of immediate knowing follows Kant in interpreting this fact as excluding all discursive activity and mediation, as a non-cognitive faith, feeling devoid of thought.[91] Hegel is critical of Jacobi, who takes the fact of religion as an immediate universal certainty that excludes all mediation.[92] On the contrary, for Hegel "the one essential fact in the fact of elevation is that it is a mediation."[93] For Hegel the elevation is both immediate and mediated by thought.

> This elevation has the thoughtful consideration of the world as its only foundation, not the merely sensory one that we have in common with animals. It is for thinking . . . alone that the essence, the substance, the universal might and purposive determination of the world are present. . . . in fact animals do not make this transition; they stay with sense experience and intuition; for that reason they do not have any religion either.[94]

The *Faktum* of religion from which the elevation proceeds

> is not a sensible one, nor an empirically concrete content of sensation or intuition, nor a . . . fanciful imagination. Rather the elevation proceeds from the *abstract thought-determinations or categories* implicit in the finitude and contingency of the world. The goal at which the elevation arrives is of a similar kind, the infinitude and absolute necessity of God, thought not in a more developed articulation, but solely in these general categories. With regard to this aspect it must be said that the universality of the fact of this elevation is false *in respect to its [representational] form*.[95]

Hegel observes further that the categories and thought-determinations first became clear and universally diffused only in modern culture, and that even this culture has not reached this insight as something immediate but only as mediated through thought and study of linguistic usage.[96]

For Hegel the fact of religion is the spontaneous elevation of spirit from world to God. As such it is immediately an act of mediation—that is, the institution of a relation and a transition.

[90] *LProofs*, 94, lecture 10. [91] *LProofs*, 51. [92] *EL* §§50–1, 62, 63.
[93] *LProofs*, 95. [94] *EL* §50R. [95] *LProofs*, 94–5. [96] *LProofs*, 95.

> This very fact, the elevation itself, is as such rather something that is immediately an act of mediation; it has its beginning, its starting point in finite, contingent existence, in worldly things, but then is an advance to something altogether other. It is consequently mediated by that beginning, and it is an elevation to what is infinite and in itself necessary only because it does not remain standing with that beginning, which is here alone the immediate (an immediate that later exhibits a merely relative character), but abandons and surrenders such a standpoint mediatedly. This elevation, which is consciousness, is thus itself mediated knowledge.[97]

The elevation of which Hegel speaks as the *Faktum* of religion has a starting point in contingent finitude and an end point with infinite absolute necessity. Spirit is propelled in its elevation by an immanent necessity that invites discursive mediation and the endeavor of proof:

> It is this circumstance—that the elevation of spirit to God has mediation within itself—*which invites to proof*, that is, the setting forth of the individual elements of the process of spirit, and indeed in the form of thought. It is spirit in its innermost aspect, namely in its thought that produces this elevation—an elevation that is the process of its categories. What should happen by means of proof is that such an activity of thinking is brought to consciousness, that consciousness recognizes this activity to be a nexus of cognitional moments. Against an exposition such as this, which unfolds itself in the field of mediating thought, faith, which wishes to continue to be immediate certainty, protests. So too does the criticism of the understanding, which is at home in the intricacies of that mediation, but for purposes of confusing the elevation itself.[98]

Hegel's account of the elevation is a third alternative to Jacobi and Kant. Jacobi regards mediation as illicit, a self-subversion of reason, a conditioning of the unconditioned—that is, as reductive sacrilege—and so rules out mediation in favor of a leap of faith. The elevation of spirit becomes a blind leap, a *sacrificium intellectus* that by excluding cognition and mediation, demands immediate, non-cognitive certainty. Kant, on the other hand, is at home in the intricacies of mediation but critically confines cognitive mediation to finitude wherein the categories become filled with empirical–sensible content, while at the same time removing the object of elevation—the absolutely necessary—into an unknowable beyond:

> But Kant's account of this elevation reduces it again to a mere postulate, a mere *Sollen* or "ought." This is the previously explained distortion, namely the postulate retains the *antithesis* of finitude. But that very elevation of spirit to God suspends the [contradictory] form of the postulate and transforms it into truth.

[97] *LProofs*, 94. [98] *LProofs*, 95–6; emphasis added.

> This elevation of subjective spirit to God must be recovered and restored to its truth and validity.[99]

Further, by reducing God to a subjective postulate, Kant's account of the elevation becomes one-sided. This one-sidedness excludes reciprocal mediation between the elements it is supposed to unite, transforming their union into something that merely ought to be—a spurious infinite.[100]

Common to both Jacobi and Kant is the surrender and/or suppression of the *factum* itself, which includes an immanent development of necessity into freedom that mediates the elevation of spirit to God. In his *Encyclopedia* Hegel emphasizes the point that the *factum* is the unity of distinct determinations—for example, finite and infinite, which the understanding takes to be absolutely different and thus incapable of either mediation or union. Hegel's point is rather that the *factum* is the unity of both—that is, the unity of immediacy and mediation:

> it is mindless not to see that the unity of distinct determinations is not just a purely immediate, i.e., totally indeterminate and empty unity, but that what is posited in it is precisely that one of the determinations has truth only through its mediation by the other . . . It is thereby shown to be a *factum*, that the determination of mediation is contained in that very immediacy, against which the understanding, in accordance with its own fundamental principle of immediate knowing, is not allowed to have any objections. It is only the ordinary abstract understanding that takes the determinations of immediacy and mediation to be absolute each on its own account, and thinks that it has a firm distinction in them; in this way *it engenders for itself the insurmountable difficulty of uniting them*—a difficulty which, as we have shown, is not present in the *factum*, while within the speculative concept it vanishes too.[101]

For Hegel the crucial claim is that the "fact of religion" involves both immediacy and mediation. This immanent necessity is what makes all the difference between the "true fact of spirit" and ephemeral chaff and chatter. Hegel writes:

> As far as faith is concerned, we may say that, however many faults the understanding may find with these proofs, and whatever defective points there may be

[99] *E.* §552.

[100] *SL* 131–7. Cf. Robert Williams, *Tragedy, Recognition and the Death of God: Studies in Hegel and Nietzsche* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), ch. 7; "Hegel's Concept of the True Infinite," *Owl of Minerva*, 42/:1–2 (2010–11), 89–122; "Hegel's True Infinity as Panentheism: A Reply to Robert Wallace," *Owl of Minerva*, 42/1–2 (2010–11), 137–52.

[101] *EL* §70R. Later Hegel adds: "But for the *factum* that there is a cognition of this kind, which proceeds neither in one-sided immediacy nor in one-sided mediation, the *Logic* itself and the whole of philosophy is the example" (*EL* §75R).

> in their explication of the elevation of the spirit from the contingent and temporal to the infinite and eternal, the human heart will not allow itself to be deprived of this elevation. . . . Faith will not allow itself to be robbed of its elevation to God, i.e., of its witness to the truth, because this elevation is intrinsically necessary, is more than some sort of accidental fact relating to spirit. There are facts and inner experiences in spirit, still more in the spirits—for spirit exists not as an abstraction but as the many spirits—facts of an infinitely varied sort, and sometimes of the most opposite and depraved character. In order that this fact may be rightly comprehended as a *fact of spirit*, and not of the ephemeral and contingent spirits, it is requisite to grasp it in its necessity. Only this necessity vouches for its rightness in this contingent and arbitrary sphere.[102]

Hegel observes that the starting points and the forms that the elevation can take are virtually limitless. For example, he observes that, when things are defined as finite, spirit elevates itself to the infinite; if things are defined as real, the infinite is ideal; if things are immediate, spirit elevates itself from this immediacy to what is essential, the ground of immediacy; if things are parts, spirit elevates itself to God as the whole.[103] All of these diverse elevations reflect categories and category determinations, even if these are not explicitly acknowledged or mentioned.

Many of these are categories of essence; in the logic of essence categories are related and their relation is initially determined as contradiction. Essence is the imperfect connection of immediacy and mediation—to wit, essence is the posited contradiction,[104] for example, of finite and infinite or the "ought to be." However, the transition from lower to higher categories is or implies the resolution of the contradiction, the reconciliation of finite and infinite or the true infinite. In this way "spirit elevates itself above the mass of contingencies, above the merely external and relative necessity involved in them, above the infinite that is merely a negative [the God-postulate or *Sollen*] and obtains to a necessity that no longer goes beyond itself but is in and for itself . . . while all other determinations are posited by it and are dependent on it."[105] He puts this point more simply thus: "The genuine other of the finite is the [true] infinite—that is the quite simple consideration involved here."[106]

For Hegel the "advance from any such initial definition of existence . . . to the final definition of God's nature, namely of the infinite in thought, is to be called a proof in exactly the same way as those proofs to which the name has been formally applied."[107] The multiplicity of starting points for the elevation all obey an immanent categorically determined necessity that moves the elevation from the finite to the infinite. Hegel's *Logic* itself is one such

[102] *LProofs*, 96. [103] *LProofs*, 97.
[104] *EL* §114. Essence is the sphere of posited contradiction, whereas, in the sphere of being, contradiction is only implicit.
[105] *LProofs*, 103. [106] *LPR* 1. 423. [107] *LProofs*, 98.

elevation, and is to this extent also a "metaphysical theology which treats the idea of God in the aether of pure thought"[108]—to wit, the absolute idea as the union of concept and reality. However, he makes it clear that an exposition of every category of the *Logic* as speculative theology is not the object of these lectures, which rather are confined to a narrower, more historical discussion of the categories of contingency and necessity, because these are the ones in which all the relations between the finitude and the infinitude of being are summed up and brought together.[109] Perhaps it is also for this reason that Hegel writes that "the first form of elevation is found historically in the so-called cosmological proof…"[110]

7. THE COSMOLOGICAL PROOF

As we have seen, Kant attacks the proofs as transcendental illusion by charging that unconditional necessity, which we require as the indispensable final bearer of all things, is a veritable abyss for human reason. Kant takes the unconditioned necessity as a purely negative concept that "removes all the conditions without which no concept of necessity is possible."[111] To illustrate the abyss, recall Kant's striking image of a necessary being asking itself "whence then am I?" Hegel cites this passage and replies to it:

> Kant says that we cannot avoid having the thought and yet we cannot entertain it, that a being whom we represent as the highest should, as it were say to itself, 'I am from eternity to eternity; outside of me there is nothing save what is through my will, *but whence then am I*?' Here everything sinks under us and floats unsteadily before speculative reason alone, and it costs the latter nothing to let the greatest as well as the least perfection vanish.
>
> But what speculative reason above all must let vanish is the putting of such a question as 'whence then am I?' into the mouth of the absolutely necessary and unconditioned—as if that which is utterly infinite, outside of which nothing exists other than through its will, could look beyond itself for an other than itself, and ask about something beyond itself.[112]

[108] *LProofs*, 99. Hegel combines Logic and metaphysics: *LProofs*, 104. Cf. *EL* §85R.
[109] *LProofs*, 99. [110] *LProofs*, 96. [111] *First Critique*, B638.
[112] *LProofs*, 156. If there were an other for the infinite, then the infinite would be only one of two, i.e., finite, or a finite–infinite. The infinite would be limited by and dependent on this other. This is Hegel's critique of Kant and the "spurious infinity of the ought." Elsewhere Hegel credits von Haller with distinguishing between the spurious infinite, which never gets beyond the ought, and the genuine infinite. Von Haller sees, as Kant and Fichte do not, that renunciation of the *progressus ad infinitum* is necessary to grasp the genuine infinite. If Hegel is correct, then Kant probably misunderstands von Haller as well as the theological issues. Cf. EL §104Z.

Inherent in Kant's rhetorical question is the assumption that the absolutely necessary has external conditions. If so, then it must be finite and contingent. If this really is what Kant means, then Hegel would agree with him that such a finite–infinite is a spurious infinite. Inherent in Hegel's sharp rhetorical reply is a different concept of necessary being that is self-grounding and as such is capable of transforming any relation to an other into a relation to itself.[113] We shall revisit this concept later.

Despite his disagreement with Kant, Hegel credits Kant with formulating the central issue that must be addressed by both the traditional cosmological argument and his recasting of it as the elevation of spirit to God. Hegel begins by quoting Kant on dialectical illusion that poses a fundamental dilemma:

> As to what concerns dialectical illusion itself . . . it consists in the fact that, while I must indeed allow that what exists in general has a necessary element, no single thing can be thought of as necessary in itself; and that, while I can never *complete* the process of going back to the conditions of existence without assuming a necessary being, I can never *start* from the latter.[114]

Kant's dilemma arises from his analysis of the cosmological argument as falling back on the ontological argument to furnish it with the concept of the absolutely necessary, and his dismissal of the ontological argument as a scholastic trick that seeks to conjure existence from abstract, formal concepts.[115]

Nevertheless, Hegel thinks that Kant's dilemma frames an important issue:

> It must in justice be allowed that this remark contains the essential element on which everything turns. What is necessary in itself must show that it has its beginning within itself, and it must be comprehended in such a way that its beginning can be demonstrated to be within itself. . . . The sole question is how to begin to show that something starts from itself, or rather, *how to combine the two considerations, to wit, that the infinite starts precisely from an other and yet in so doing starts only from itself.*[116]

Kant believes that his dilemma shows that theology is a transcendental illusion; however, Hegel denies this. So he undertakes to dissolve the dilemma by showing that the infinite starts from an other, and yet in so doing starts only from itself. This will require finding a way to combine the empirical approach of the cosmological argument with the infinite understood as the absolutely necessary—which the ontological proof demonstrates. The underlying issue is how to combine both immediacy and mediation? How to show

[113] *LProofs*, 106–8. Hegel's position is not monism, but rather trinitarian articulated holism.
[114] *LProofs*, 157, citing *First Critique*, B643–4; emphasis in original.
[115] We shall treat Kant's attack on and Hegel's defense of the ontological argument in Ch. 3.
[116] "Fragment on the Cosmological Proof," in *LProofs*, 157; emphasis added.

that the infinite starts from an other—contingent being—and yet in so doing starts only from itself (necessity).

The problem calls for a solution similar to Hegel's resolution of the classical dilemma of first principles.[117] On the one hand, a first principle cannot be immediate, for if it is immediately asserted, it is dogmatic, and as such invites the skeptical equipollence rejoinder that forces a suspension of judgment. As dogmatically asserted, the principle is apparently subjective and may be countered by another asserted with equal immediacy, but opposite in sense.[118] While Hegel is no skeptic and does not embrace the skeptical epoché or suspension of judgment, he comments that a first principle, if true, is also false, because it is only an undeveloped principle—that is, it is defective in that it is only a beginning.[119] On the other hand, a first principle cannot be mediated, for what is mediated depends on that which mediates it. So a first principle it seems can be neither *merely immediate* because it would be only a subjective beginning, nor *merely mediated*, because then it would be dependent and derivative from whatever mediates it.

This means that philosophy cannot begin with the absolute; rather it must begin with something *other* than the absolute, and then seek to explicate the absolute by showing its systematic development—that is, mediation, from its abstract beginning. This has implications for understanding the absolute: "Of the absolute it must be said that it is essentially a result, that only in the end is it what it truly is; and that precisely in this consists its nature, to be actual, subject, the spontaneous becoming of itself."[120] Hegel's absolute is self-grounding—that is, it is both immediate and mediated, to wit, a self-mediated immediacy; it both repulses itself from itself, opposes itself, and negates its opposition and thus returns to itself as a self-mediated immediacy and totality.

In the "Fragment on the Cosmological Proof," Hegel is entertaining and seeking to develop a similar self-mediated immediacy resolution to Kant's dilemma when he proposes to treat the proofs as moments or aspects of the concept, and thus as elevations of finite spirit to the infinite. Hegel states the issue thus: "The sole question is how to begin to show that something starts from itself, or rather, *how to combine the two considerations, to wit, that the infinite starts precisely from an other and yet in so doing starts only from itself*." Hegel's hypothesis is that the cosmological argument, which starts from something other than the infinite, is to be understood as an elevation to the infinite as necessary being. But this is not the abstract spurious infinite opposed to and exclusive of the finite, but rather the true infinite that includes

[117] See Ch. 1, Sect. 5.

[118] This skeptical argument is at the basis of Kant's doctrine of the antinomies as transcendental illusions. It emerges in Fichte's "First Introduction to *Wissenschaftslehre*", and for Fichte it is susceptible not to a theoretical but only to a practical solution: what sort of philosophy one chooses depends on interests, what sort of human being one is, etc.

[119] *PhS* §24. [120] *PhS* §20.

the finite in itself. Thus in starting from the finite as its self-sublating other, the true infinite starts only from itself and thus is immanent in and powers spirit's ascent or elevation to God. In this way, Kant's dilemma and his skeptical conclusions are averted—that is, instead of imposing on religion the alien claims that it is instrumental and subordinate to morality and that theology is a transcendent illusion, Hegel claims that Kant's moral vision of the world is itself fundamentally dissembling and illusion,[121] as he recasts religion as the elevation of finite spirit to God.

Hegel is cognizant that the cosmological argument as traditionally formulated and understood is not taken as a transition. He is aware of the difficulties Kant and Jacobi find in the traditional argument and that their criticisms expose defects that undermine the argument. However, Hegel believes that the failure of the traditional argument leaves the elevation of spirit—a natural logic clarified and expounded by dialectical logic—unaffected. Hegel deconstructs the classical argument, including its logic, categories and metaphysics, to differentiate the elevation of spirit from the traditional cosmological argument and to correct the distortions and defects introduced by traditional metaphysics.

8. THE DEFECT IN THE COSMOLOGICAL PROOF

Hegel differentiates the Cosmological Proof from the elevation of spirit to God in Lecture 13, "The Defect in the Argument from Contingency to Necessity."[122] However he initially formulated the underlying issues in his "Fragment on the Cosmological Argument," and before that in his *Logic* (1812). He focuses on the topic of contingency, and argues that the traditional forms of proposition and argument fail to express the full range of meaning of contingency, but rather conceal and suppress the possible non-being inherent in contingency. This failure results in distortions that undermine the argument—for example, metaphysical positivism and dualism that prevent transition from finite to infinite, and that lead to absurdities that convinced F. H. Jacobi, the German translator of David Hume, of the aptness of Hume's despairing assertion that we are confronted with a choice between a false reason and none at all. Jacobi's critique of the argument depends almost entirely on a confusion produced by correctible distortions. In what follows we shall see that Hegel undertakes a "theme-and-variation" approach to certain propositions to bring out the various senses as he makes his case concerning the distortion of the argument in traditional logic and metaphysics, and

[121] See *PhS* §§596–631. [122] *LProofs*, 111–18.

concerning the divergences between the traditional argument and the elevation of spirit. We shall compare and contrast the elevation of spirit with the cosmological proof in Section 9.

Hegel tells us that he is going to compare what is formally expressed as the (cosmological) proof with the elevation of spirit to God. The difference is slight but important and consequential, because the formal defects in the traditional argument not only contradict the rational content, but also supply grounds for the widespread rejection of the proof. He begins with a proposition that, in keeping with his thesis, summarizes the argument in a way that shows it to contain mediation by an other: "*Because* the world is contingent, *therefore* an absolutely necessary being [*Wesen*] exists."[123] What is of primary importance here is the relationship that is indicated in the proposition:

> Because the one, the contingent, *exists* or *is*, *therefore* the other, the absolutely necessary is. Here there are *two entities* in connection—one being with another being—a connexion that we have seen in the form of *external* necessity. It is precisely this external necessity, however, that is immediately recognized to be a dependence in which the result [the absolutely necessary] *depends* on its starting point [contingent being] . . .[124]

Hegel discusses Jacobi's reading of the proof and his negative view of cognition in general. To know means to derive a thing from its proximate cause or condition; in short, to know means to condition. Therefore to know or comprehend the unconditioned means to condition it; specifically, to make the absolutely necessary depend on the finite and contingent starting point. This interpretation of the argument is absurd because it reduces the absolutely necessary to something finite and contingent, and in Jacobi's view, shows that reason and rational mediation not only are self-refuting, but are equivalent to blasphemy. But Jacobi's attack on mediation depends on a misreading and reflects a confusion. Hegel points out:

> The proposition does not state, and is not meant to state, that the absolutely necessary has conditions and indeed is conditioned by the contingent world—quite the contrary. . . . It is only our knowledge of the absolutely necessary that is conditioned by that starting point. The absolutely necessary does not exist by raising itself out of the world of contingency and requiring this world as its . . . presupposition, in order that by starting from it, it first attains existence.[125]

More fundamentally Hegel adds:

> What has to be thought of as something mediated by an other, as something dependent and conditioned, cannot be the absolutely necessary, cannot be God. *It is the content of the proof itself that corrects the defect visible only in its form.*[126]

[123] *LProofs*, 111. [124] *LProofs*, 111; emphasis in original. [125] *LProofs*, 112.
[126] *LProofs*, 112; emphasis in original.

Hegel clarifies the formal defect in the argument by contrasting two propositions: (1) "If the contingent is," and (2) "There is a contingent world." The first is a clear statement of contingency, as something that includes the possibility both of being and of not-being. The opposite of any contingent matter of fact is always possible. In contrast, the second proposition simply asserts that what is finite and contingent *has being*, but it ignores and passes over the second possibility inherent in contingency—to wit, not-being. Hegel explains that "the contingent, the finite, is expressed as something that *has being*; but the determinate quality of the finite is rather to have an end, to *collapse*, to be the sort of *being* that has only the value of a possibility, and that can just as well *exist* as *not exist*."[127] The second proposition implies that the finite has being and is wholly affirmative, while suppressing its possible non-being. In view of this suppression, a word of explanation and logical–metaphysical analysis is in order.

In his *Logic* Hegel shows that the category of determinate being is the unity of being and nothing. Determinateness isolated by itself in the form of being is quality. Quality, taken in the distinct character of being, is reality; as burdened with a negative, it is negation in general, which is further determined as limit and limitation.[128] Determinate being includes both reality and negation, "but in reality with the accent on *being*, *the fact is concealed that it contains determinateness and therefore also negation*."[129]

Traditional logic and metaphysics pass over this negation, and dwell in finite thought-determinations that take their terms as given and ready-made.[130] This is a metaphysical prejudice inherited from empiricism, as Hegel notes.[131] Traditional thought concerning reality as being suppresses the negation inherent in contingency. So the terms are taken as stable and fixed—that is, not subject to negation. "Reality" becomes wholly affirmative, and is assumed to survive when all negation has been excluded. This assumption is metaphysical positivism. Contingent finitude is taken as "having being," but its equally possible non-being is suppressed and forgotten. Hegel shows that the reflected determinations of being—for example, something and other, finite and infinite—count as qualitative, as existing on their own account. Thus "the finite *is*"—that is, the finite ranks equally with the infinite as an immediate affirmative being standing on its own, and each appears complete without the other.[132] Moreover, to separate reality from negation is to do away with determinateness. In the theology of rationalist metaphysics the opposition between reality and negation becomes absolute. The result is a self-refuting metaphysical positivism in which "God, as the pure reality in all

[127] *LProofs*, 113; emphasis in original. [128] *SL* 109–111.
[129] *SL* 111; emphasis added. [130] *EL* §§28–31.
[131] *EL* §§47, 39–40. [132] *SL* 122.

realities . . . is just as devoid of determinateness as the empty absolute in which all is one."[133]

Let us return to the analysis of the cosmological proof: Hegel indicates that the suppression of the possible non-being inherent in contingency is the fundamental distortion in the traditional proof. That proof has a permanent immediacy in its premises that flattens and distorts crucial differences between the content of the terms of the premises.[134] To suppress the possible non-being inherent in contingency distorts the meaning of contingency and the meaning of the argument from contingency to necessity: "The essential and formal defect of the cosmological proof lies in the fact that finite being not only is taken as the mere beginning and starting point, but also is maintained and allowed to subsist as *something true and affirmative*. All the forms of reflection . . . —presupposition, conditionedness, causality—have in common the fact that the presupposed, the condition, the effect, are taken *only as affirmative*."[135]

This metaphysical prejudice deriving from Hume's empiricism[136] led Jacobi astray in his misguided critique of the cosmological argument as a seeking of conditions for the unconditioned, and led him erroneously to believe that the proof demonstrates that God actually depends on the prior existence of the world. Jacobi was misled because "the metaphysical proofs . . . are deficient explanations and descriptions of the elevation of spirit from the world to God, because they do not . . . bring out the moment of *negation* that is contained in this elevation."[137] Consequently Jacobi grasped the terms of the argument only as an affirmative relation between two beings. "However the way the elevation takes place in spirit corrects this semblance; indeed its whole import is the correction of this semblance. But Jacobi did not recognize this [correction] as the genuine nature of essential thinking: that in its mediation it sublates mediation itself."[138] Hegel corrects Jacobi's misreading and clarifies the traditional cosmological argument:

> If therefore we begin with the contingent, we must not set out from it as something that remains *fixed* in such a way that in the progression it continues to *have being*. This is only one side of its determinateness. Rather [contingency] is to be posited in its *full determinate character*, which means that *non-being* may just as well be attributed to it and that consequently it enters into the result as a *passing away*. Not because the contingent *is*, but rather because it is non-being, *only appearance*, because its being is not genuine actuality—it is because of this that *absolute necessity* is. The latter is its being and truth.[139]

[133] *SL* 113; *EL* §36. [134] *LProofs*, 113. [135] *LProofs*, 162; emphasis added.
[136] *EL* §§47, 39. [137] *EL* §§50R, 192, 204R. [138] *EL* §§50R, 192, 204R.
[139] *LProofs*, 114.

9. DIFFERENTIATING ELEVATION OF SPIRIT FROM THE COSMOLOGICAL PROOF

It is the natural, instinctive logic of the elevation of spirit to God—which *does* assert and *preserve* the full determinate character of contingency as both possible existence and possible non-existence—to which Hegel appeals in his critique of the metaphysical positivism that distorts the traditional cosmological proof:

> This moment of the *negative* is not found in the form taken by the syllogism of the understanding, and therefore the latter is defective in the region of the living reason of spirit—in the region wherein absolute necessity itself is considered as the true result.[140]

As we have seen, the absolute is not a result derivative from an allegedly prior and foundational finite. Rather, the absolute is self-determining and self-grounding. Consequently "the elevation of spirit to God has not been correctly explained in the proof of the existence of God that it constitutes."[141] The traditional logical and metaphysical expression of elevation distorts and subverts its meaning when it attributes being in an unqualified affirmative sense to contingency and suppresses or conceals its equally inherent non-being. The traditional argument falsifies both contingent being and the absolutely necessary; thereby it demonstrates the "incapacity, not of faith, not of spirit, not of reason, but rather [the incapacity] of the understanding to grasp the finite as a nullity, to grasp its being as something that has equally the . . . signification of non-being."[142] On the contrary, "the finite cannot be thought and represented without the quality of non-being that resides in passing away."[143]

Stated otherwise, the traditional argument as interpreted by Jacobi and others is formally–methodologically dualistic. In it there are two separate, independent beings. But this external relation involves a contradictory dualism of finite–infinite opposition that makes any transition from finite to infinite unnecessary (because finitude is treated as a self-sufficient atom) and impossible (because of the gulf fixed between finite and infinite). Hegel seeks to make this point with a further set of theme and variations on the original proposition that summarizes the argument: "Because contingent being exists, so also does absolutely necessary being."[144] If we take this connection without defining it more precisely by the category of ground or reason, its meaning is merely this:

> Contingent being is *at the same time* the being of an other, that of absolutely necessary being.

[140] *LProofs*, 114. [141] *LProofs*, 114. [142] *LProofs*, 125.
[143] *LProofs*, 125. [144] *LProofs*, 112.

This proposition seems to be a contradiction, which can be analyzed into antithetical subpropositions. The first proposition is:

> The being of the contingent is *not* its own being, but *only* the being of an other, and indeed it is defined as the being of its other, the absolutely necessary.

This proposition appears to have monist implications reminiscent of Spinoza's substance—which Hegel criticizes for defrauding finitude and difference of its due.[145] Nevertheless this proposition, when appropriately qualified, is closer to the elevation of spirit to God, which is Hegel's position. However, the second, opposite proposition is clearly dualistic:

> The being of the contingent is *only* its own being, and not the being of an other, the absolutely necessary.[146]

That is, the finite *is* and is self-sufficient. Clearly both propositions are one-sided accounts of the finite–infinite relation constitutive of religion.[147] Onesidedness means the loss and/or suppression of one term in favor of the other. Hegel's strategy will be to overcome their one-sidedness by showing them to be mutually mediating. This will include important modifications both of finitude (the doctrine of the ideality of the finite) and of absolute necessity (showing that it is not abstract substance or abstract identity, but inwardly concrete and determinate). Although Hegel's thesis is that finite and infinite, rightly understood, are inseparable—they remain distinct. Nevertheless, their inseparability means that there is no gulf between them that has to be bridged somehow, and that no transition from finite to infinite is necessary because the infinite is present in the finite and vice versa.

Here we shall focus on Hegel's analysis of finitude. Hegel claims that the second proposition, that the being of the contingent is only its own being and not the being of an other, the absolutely necessary,

> is that of the understanding, to which modern times has so attached itself. What can be more reasonable than to hold that any sort of thing or existence, and so too the contingent, because it is, is its own being, is in fact just the *determinate* being that it is, and not an other. The contingent is in this way retained on its own account, separated from the absolutely necessary. . . . Therefore it is said that there is no bridge, no passage from finite being to infinite; the finite is simply related to itself, not to its other. . . . A gulf is simply fixed between them.[148]

[145] *EL* §151Z. [146] *LProofs*, 117; emphasis added. [147] *E.* §554; *LPR* 1. 116.

[148] *LProofs*, 117. In this proposition, the categories of the understanding, to wit, abstract identity and abstract difference, along with the law of contradiction—which keeps identity and difference separate and constitutes metaphysical positivism—are evident. Cf. *SL* 129–30: "finitude is the most stubborn category of the understanding . . . finitude is the negation as *fixed in itself* . . . "

Hegel observes that classical Christianity has indirectly influenced this atomistic view of finitude:

> There can be no doubt that the essential and Christian definition of freedom and of individuality, which as free is infinite within itself and is personality, has misled the understanding into conceiving the individualization of finitude in terms of the category of a subsisting unchangeable atom, and of overlooking the element of the negative that resides in power . . . [149]

In contrast, the elevation of spirit to God exhibits a dialectic that breaks down the fixity of terms and categories as abstract, separate, and external atomic units, into reciprocally mediating processes and transitions.[150] Both the self-subsisting atom of finitude and finite personality, and the apparently inexorable absolute necessity of the infinite abstract substance (Spinoza), undergo modification in their reciprocal relation and mutual mediation. Such reciprocity, relationship, and mutual mediation of finite in infinite and infinite in finite is what Hegel is after:

> When . . . it is said that the being of the finite is only its own being and not at all the being of an other, it is declared that there is no possible passage from finite to infinite and thus no mediation between them . . . The result is that, although the finite may perchance be mediated through the infinite, *the reverse is not true, which is just the point of interest*.[151]

Both classical theology and deism assert a one-sided, asymmetrical relation between finite and infinite. But Hegel rejects this as a halfway measure that is inconsistent: "A one-sided relationship, however, is not a relationship at all."[152] Genuine relation is reciprocal. Is such a reciprocal relation possible between finite and infinite? In what would the reciprocity consist? What would unite these? Hegel will claim that they are related in an interrelated whole, an articulated totality that is a universal community of universal freedom in which God is the spirit of the whole. In such a conception, Hegel asserts—on the one hand—that absolute necessity, which, as self-sufficient and independent of any other, is nevertheless mediated with and by an other—that is, the finite. On the other hand, he believes that finitude need not harden itself into an impenetrable atom—the negative fixed in itself. Such hardening leads to tragic consequences. However, such petrified freedom can and does negate/sublate itself, let go of its fixity, and reconcile with its other the infinite. We focus on the self-sublation of the finite here, and will take up Hegel's modifications of absolute necessity in the following section.

In his lectures, Hegel refers to his *Logic* and logical categories, but adds that the qualities that belong to the nature of the concepts themselves, as exhibited

[149] *LProofs*, 137. [150] *LProofs*, 163.
[151] *LProofs*, 119; emphasis added. [152] *LProofs*, 66.

in the logic, must show themselves and be present in ordinary consciousness as well.[153] Instead of an opposition of the terms finite and infinite as metaphysical dualism, or an exclusive either/or, the elevation can be expressed thus: "The being of the finite is not only its own being, but *also* the being of the infinite."[154] The problem is to understand this "also." The traditional metaphysical argument takes finitude as something true and affirmative, resulting in dualism. The fixity and rigidity of its terms prevent grasping the connection between the terms as a *transition*.[155] In contrast, the speculative interpretation of the finite grasps it as a transition, a process. Thus the major premise of the cosmological argument should read: "*the being of the finite is not its own being, but rather the being of its other, the infinite.*"[156] Accordingly, the minor premise "the finite is"—taken in the wholly affirmative sense that constitutes ontological dualism and fixes an unbridgeable gulf—falls away.

The true infinite is not one of two but rather includes its other—the finite—within itself. This inclusion of the finite in the true infinite means that dualism is avoided. However, the distinction between finite and infinite is preserved in the infinite as a distinction between an articulated whole and its members. The true infinite corrects the abstract categories of the understanding by sublating their mutual externality.

> Here there is no relationship or mediation between two elements each of which abides; rather the point of departure sublates itself . . . The infinite does not constitute merely one aspect. For the understanding there are . . . two actual beings: on this side there is a world and over yonder there is God, and the knowledge of the world is the foundation of the being of God. But through our treatment the world is relinquished as genuine being; it is not regarded as something permanent . . . The sole import of this procedure is that *the infinite alone is*; the finite has no genuine being, whereas God alone has genuine being.[157]

In the speculative interpretation, the finite starting point sublates itself. Finitude is no longer to be understood as the negative fixed in itself,[158] but rather undergoes a self-transformation and transition that has an affirmative sense, *not in finitude by itself, but in its union with the infinite.* Hegel observes:

> The difficulty here is . . . the truly dialectical relationship . . . according to which the condition, or whatever other definition may be given of contingent existence or the finite, is precisely such as to take itself up into the unconditioned, the infinite, and thus to do away with the condition in the conditioning and with the mediation in the mediating.[159]

[153] *LProofs*, 119. [154] *LProofs*, 162; emphasis added. [155] *LProofs*, 162–3.
[156] *LProofs*, 163. [157] *LPR* 1. 424; emphasis in original. [158] *SL* 130.
[159] *LProofs*, 156. Hegel adds that Kant did not penetrate beyond the relations of the understanding to the conception of infinite negativity. Nor did Spinoza, whose doctrine determination is negation, is Spinoza's absolute principle that establishes the absolute unity of substance. Spinoza does not advance to the absolute negativity as a negation of negation, and so his

This analysis includes a speculative consideration of the contingency of the finite as an unstable synthesis of being and nothing, reality and negation.

> The speculative consideration of the nature of the finite, from which the infinite comes forth, is the axis around which the whole—the knowledge of God and God's cognition—turns. The essential point in this mediation, however, is that the being of the finite is not the affirmative, but rather that it is the self-sublation of the being of the finite by which the infinite is posited and mediated.[160]

Hegel's formulation of the transition from finite to infinite in the *Science of Logic* shows that the self-sublation of the finite has affirmative significance:

> Finite things . . . are . . . contradictory and *disrupted within themselves and . . . return into their ground* . . . The true inference from a finite and contingent being to an absolutely necessary being does not consist in inferring the latter from the former as from a being that *is and remains the ground*. On the contrary, the inference is from a being that, as is also directly implied in *contingency*, is only in a state of collapse and is *inherently self-contradictory*; or rather, the true inference consists in showing that contingent being in its own self *withdraws into its ground in which it is sublated*, and further, that *by this withdrawal it posits the ground only in such a manner that it rather makes itself into a positedness*.[161]

This passage articulates the self-sublation of finitude in the elevation to true infinite. The withdrawal of finitude into its ground involves a decentering reversal. In positing its ground, the finite simultaneously posits itself as something affirmative that is posited by its ground ("*d*aß es durch dies Zurückgehen den Grund nur so setze, daß es sich selbst vielmehr zum Gesetzten macht").[162] The finite decenters itself; it is relative to and a manifestation of its ground. Hegel expresses this self-sublation as an inversion of the utilitarian–pragmatic orientation of the natural attitude thus: "Reason in general is the idea; the idea is reason. We do not possess the idea, rather the idea possesses us. Reason possesses us; it is our substance."[163]

Hegel acknowledges that this reversal inverts the world of ordinary consciousness. It goes against the grain of ordinary consciousness to give up its presupposition that this aggregate of finitude called the world has actual reality.

substance does not contain the absolute form, i.e., negation of negation (*SL* 536). Hegel inverts Spinoza's doctrine "all determination is negation" into "negation is determination. Negation of determination is itself a determining. Where there is no negation there is also no distinction, no determination" (*LPR* 1. 426–7). Where Spinoza's absolute does not negate itself, is immutable, impersonal, and has been characterized as an eternal paralytic (H. A. Wolfson, *The Philosophy of Spinoza* (Cleveland, OH: Meridian Books, 1965, 2. 346), Hegel's absolute moves by negating, i.e., determining, itself, and determines itself as *activity, life and Spirit.*

[160] *LProofs*, 156. [161] *SL* 443; emphasis added.
[162] *SL* 443; *WL*, in *Werke*, 6. 79. [163] *BPhG* 98–9.

> That *there is no world*, as it might be put . . . is easily dismissed as quite impossible, or at least much less possible than that it might come into someone's head that *there is no God*. People find much more plausible that a system denies God than that it denies the world. A denial of God seems so much more intelligible than a denial of the world.[164]

However, Hegel's claim does not involve any such denial of the world. What Hegel denies is that finitude is wholly affirmative and as such excludes possible non-being. "Although being certainly does pertain to the world, it is only semblance, not genuine being, not absolute . . . "[165] The immanent nullity and self-sublation of finitude imply that "it is not the finite that is the real, but the infinite."[166]

But the finite does not simply disappear. The truth of the finite is its ideality. As Stephen Houlgate has pointed out, the ideality of the finite is an ontological doctrine about the status of the finite *within* the true infinite.[167] The ideality of the finite means that finitude does not simply disappear in the infinite—as Hegel believes is the case in Spinoza's metaphysics of absolute substance, which he interprets as the abyss of abstract identity.[168] With the doctrine of the ideality of the finite, Hegel seeks to thread the needle between Spinoza's monism of abstract substance, and the dualism of classical theism and deism. The ideality of the finite means that finitude is a moment or member of the true infinite as an articulated whole: "ideal being [*das Ideelle*] is the *finite as it is in the true infinite*—as a determination, a content, which is distinct but is not an independent, self-subsistent being, but only a moment. Ideality has this more concrete signification which is not fully expressed by the negation of finite determinate being."[169] In his *Encyclopedia Logic* he indicates that the ideality of the finite is systematically related to the concept of the true infinite: "The truth of the finite is . . . its ideality. . . . This ideality of the finite is the *most important proposition of philosophy* . . . [because] the *basic concept of philosophy, the true infinite, depends on it*."[170] It is impossible to overestimate the significance and importance of these assertions for Hegel. Giacomo Rinaldi has pointed out that the concept of the true infinite belongs to the speculative nucleus of Hegel's philosophy.[171] In the *Philosophy of Religion* Hegel

[164] *EL* §50R; I have modified the translation. Hegel's point challenges interpretations of his philosophy as naturalism, and left-Hegelian, quasi-Kantian interpretations of religion, without theology or with a "postulate theology."

[165] *EL* §50R. [166] *SL* 149.

[167] Stephen Houlgate, *The Opening of Hegel's Logic* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2006), 428–32; cf. Williams, "Hegel's Concept of the True Infinite"; cf. Williams, *Tragedy, Recognition and the Death of God*, ch. 6.

[168] "If the finite were to disappear in God, God would be merely the absolute substance, from which nothing proceeds and into which nothing returns—and even to represent or think of the absolute substance would already be too much, something that itself would have to disappear" (*LProofs*, 90).

[169] *SL* 149–150. [170] *EL* §95R; emphasis added. [171] *HILH* 8–18, §§18–21.

elaborates the ideality of the finite within the true infinite as a social–communal concept in the language of religion: "The presupposition is that God alone is true actuality, that, insofar as I have actuality, I have it only in God; since God alone is actuality, I should have my truth and actuality in God. That is the foundation of the cultus."[172]

10. THE END THAT ELEVATES: ABSOLUTE NECESSITY

We have found that the elevation of spirit predelineates and invites the cosmological proof, and corrects its distortions by traditional logic and metaphysics. We now focus on Hegel's concern to show that the elevation is not merely the fact of religion, but that this fact also involves mediation: "The one essential fact in the fact of elevation is that it is a mediation."[173] Hegel writes:

> Faith will not allow itself to be robbed of its elevation to God, i.e., its witness to truth, because this elevation is intrinsically necessary; it is something more than some sort of accidental fact relating to spirit. In order that it may be rightly comprehended as a fact of spirit, and not of ephemeral and contingent [or depraved] spirits, it is requisite to grasp it in its necessity. Only this necessity vouches for its rightness.[174]

The object at which elevation aims is absolute necessity.[175]

It is important to underscore that the one essential fact in the fact of elevation is that it is a mediation. It is important to understand this mediation, especially in relation to absolute necessity. Whatever else absolute necessity might mean, for Hegel it does not, like Spinoza's substance, exclude mediation, negation, or an other. To be sure, Hegel expresses the true infinite as complete in and for itself and thus independent:

> spirit . . . elevates itself above the mass of contingencies, above the merely external and relative necessity involved in them, above the infinite that is merely a negative [spurious] infinite, [*das Sollen*] and obtains to a necessity that no longer goes beyond itself [*Jenseits*] but is in and for itself, is enclosed within itself, and is . . . complete within itself, while all other determinations are posited by it and are dependent on it.[176]

This sounds as though absolute necessity is without relation to an other because every possible other depends upon it, and that such independence entails absence of mediation and relation. Nevertheless, Hegel challenges this traditional metaphysical view of the matter. Recall his criticisms that a

[172] *LPR* 1. 444. [173] *LProofs*, 95. [174] *LProofs*, 96.
[175] *LProofs*, 130–1. [176] *LProofs*, 103.

one-sided relation is no relation at all[177] and that, although according to classical theology the finite may be mediated through the infinite, *the reverse is not true*, *which is just the point of interest*.[178] Hegel is well aware that absolute necessity is self-grounding and self-sufficient, and that this self-sufficiency appears to exclude the mediation of absolute necessity with its other the finite because absolute necessity transforms any relation to other into a relation to itself.[179] This appears to reduce the other and the difference to abstract identity and unity.

Nevertheless, he asserts that *both* independence and mediation by other belong to the *one* necessity and must not contradict each other in the unity by which they are united in it. This unity—mediation with other—is at the same time mediation with self.[180] Further, this unity with self is *not* abstract identity or abstract unity.[181] True unity is speculative, a *unity in and through opposition*. Thus absolute "necessity is not abstract, but truly absolute, solely in virtue of the fact that it contains connection with other within itself. It is differentiation within itself, but as something that is sublated and ideal."[182]

Here we can see Hegel relying on the doctrine of the ideality of the finite to support his concept of absolute necessity as the true infinite, the concrete universal, and determinate identity. If the being of the finite were presumed to be only its own and not at all the being of its other—the infinite—this would result in dualism and the spurious, finite–infinite. Given that dualism, if the finite were to come into contact with the infinite, it would perish.[183] Mediation would be equivalent to annihilation. Moreover, if the finite were annihilated by the infinite, the result would be monism, pantheism (all-one). The difference, finitude, would not receive its due.[184] The only way finitude and difference receive their due is through staking out a middle position between absolute monism and abstract identity, on the one hand, and dualism, on the other. Hegel achieves this with the doctrine of the ideality of the finite, which is constituted through the self-sublation of the finite. This self-sublation cancels both the unqualified affirmative reality of the contingent finite (that suppresses its negativity and constitutes dualism), and its unqualified annihilation—that is, preserves it in relation to absolute necessity. Thus Hegel tells us that

> spirit can occupy itself with the finite in a true way, whether in the form of cognition, knowledge, opinion, or in a practical and moral fashion, *only insofar as*

[177] *LProofs*, 66. [178] *LProofs*, 119; emphasis added.
[179] *LProofs*, 108. [180] *LProofs*, 106. [181] *LProofs*, 106.
[182] *LProofs*, 108. This comment is made within the discussion of ancient Greek fate piety that features a self-sublation that is total self-renunciation. Even so, Hegel's general point about the ideality of the finite stands: it is an elevation, a spiritual conception, albeit one without reconciliation.
[183] *LProofs*, 122. [184] *EL* §151Z.

> *the finite is not taken for itself but is known, recognized and engaged in its connection to the infinite, the infinite within it . . .*[185]

Thus, even in this unfinished manuscript, which comes to an end in an incomplete discussion of absolute necessity, Hegel asserts that absolute necessity is inwardly concrete, combining both mediation through other and self-mediation. The absolute self-relation of the absolute includes mediation with other.[186] The ideality of the finite is its inclusion as a moment within the true infinite. Conversely, as the above text asserts, true infinite is also immanent in the finite. They are reciprocally related and mutually mediating, a unity in difference.

Hegel concludes (insofar as one can use this term about an incomplete manuscript) his discussion of the mutual immanence of the finite and infinite in the elevation of spirit with the following remarks:

> The contingent by its very nature is that which resolves and dissolves itself; it is transition in itself. But . . . this resolution is not the abstraction of nothingness; rather it is *affirmation* within the resolution—the *affirmation that we call absolute necessity*. It is in this way that the transition is conceived. The result is shown to be *immanent* in the contingent, i.e., it is the very nature of the contingent to revert back to its truth. The elevation of our spirit to God—insofar as we have provisionally no further definition of God than that of absolutely necessary being, *or because for the moment we are satisfied with it*—is the course of development followed by this movement of the thing-religion-is-about [*die Sache*]; *it is this thing in and for itself, which is the driving power within us, that which drives this movement within us.*[187]

Hegel's use of the term "absolute necessity" here is clearly provisional, pending further qualification. It constitutes a subordinate logical phase in the logical idea; as such it falls short of God as absolute spirit.[188] These qualifications mean that for Hegel absolute necessity is not sheer power or efficient causality or force, but rather the persuasive power of final causality: the result of the elevation is immanent in contingent being, as the driving power within it that awakens the movement of elevation. This immanence of infinite in the finite is the reason why the contingent sublates or decenters itself, reverts back to its truth, and withdraws into its ground—the infinite. This is the religious elevation of subjective spirit to God.[189] However, because the true infinite is

[185] *LProofs*, 123; emphasis added. [186] *LProofs*, 129–30. [187] *LProofs*, 131.

[188] See *EL* §151Z: "Substance is an essential stage in the process of development of the idea, but it is not the idea itself. It is . . . only the idea in the still restricted form of necessity. Now God is certainly necessity . . . but at the same time he is absolute personhood as well."

[189] Errol Harris has appreciated this immanence of the infinite in the finite, the ultimate end in the finite, but interprets it rather as variation on infinite striving of morality, while conceding that it has the effect of displacing morality and the moral vision of the world as falling short of religion proper, to wit, the moral point of view is the illusion that God is not present. See *ILH* 271, 286. Hegel's point in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* is that infinite striving is

not the abstract universal, but rather concrete, self-limited, and articulated, it "*validates* the moment of finitude within itself as ideal."[190] Inherent in such validation is the preservation of the finite within the true infinite. The ideality of the finite is expressed in its striving to express and cooperate with the infinite as a member.[191] "The truth [of the finite–infinite relation] is the *unity of the infinite in which the finite is contained*."[192]

In his 1827 lectures Hegel makes explicit the deconstruction of the opposition between finite and infinite inherent in the above analysis:

> It is undoubtedly correct that we are limited . . . However it is equally correct that the finite element [as independent, separated from the whole] has no truth, and reason is precisely the insight that the finite is only a limit. But inasmuch as we know something as a limit, we are already beyond it. We must not have such absurd respect in the presence of the infinite. The infinite is . . . *the universal within which every boundary is ideal, is sublated*. Therefore . . . there is . . . also *no longer a gulf between finite and infinite*, they are no longer two. . . . The starting point is certainly the finite, but spirit does not leave it subsisting [independently]. This is the more precise development of what is called knowledge of God. Knowledge of God is this very elevation.[193]

The true infinite is not only *not opposed* to the finite, but includes the finite within itself; moreover, the true infinite is not abstract transcendent *Jenseits*, but rather the whole that is immanent, present in, and awakening its finite members.

Hegel's assertion that "we must not have such absurd respect in the presence of the infinite" is a criticism of the abstract universal and abstract transcendence—the spurious infinite, which is opposed to the finite and thus is finite—together with the corresponding view of the finite–infinite relation as heteronomous and an unbridgeable gulf.[194] Respect for the abstract, transcendent, unknown infinite is absurd, because it is based on holding fast to finitude—the negative fixed in itself. The true infinite, by negating the presumption that the being of the finite is only its own, not that of an other, sublates the finite into its own self-relation. The infinite's self-relation is not immediate or abstract identity, in which the finite would be annihilated; rather it is mediated by the sublation of the finite as an ideal moment in the infinite.

grounded in the presence of God and directed toward the transformation of the world and secular realm toward achieving universal freedom, love, and justice.

[190] *LPR* 2. 258.

[191] See *LPR* 2. 258: "The infinite is not merely a negative, a beyond [*Jenseits*] but also affirmative . . . This means that the infinite consists in inwardly determining itself or validating the moment of finitude within itself (as ideal). . . . consequently there is limit in it [infinite] and with limit, there is the finite."

[192] *LPR* 1. 309; emphasis added.

[193] *LPR* 1. 425.

[194] Hegel criticizes both traditional theistic metaphysics and Kant's perpetuation of its view of the finite–infinite relation as an unbridgeable gulf (*Jenseits*).

Thus the infinite's self-relation is not abstract and exclusive, but concrete and mediated by the finite; as a negation of negation, it preserves the distinction of the finite *from* the infinite *within* the infinite.[195] The true infinite is not beyond (*Jenseits*), but present in its members as the whole in which they are united. This interpretation is confirmed in Hegel's *Lectures on the Proofs:* "That respect for the infinite that *keeps the understanding from finding the infinite in every universal* ought to be called a foolish respect."[196] Such foolish respect for the spurious infinite, the abstract *Jenseits,* hinders and deters the recognition and knowledge of God as "the spirit that awakens that elevation of spirit to God, that religion in humanity."[197]

To summarize: Hegel's account of the elevation as following an immanent necessity includes (1) the self-sublation of the finite, its withdrawal into its ground, the absolute necessary. In positing its ground, finitude posits itself as posited, and this is its grounding and its affirmative being as an ideal moment within the whole. (2) That which is in and for itself, the absolutely necessary. For Hegel, the ontological proof, which we shall discuss in the next chapter, articulates and provides the best interpretation and explication of the sense of the absolutely necessary. It is the end, the result of the elevation; however, as the result, absolute necessity is the true beginning, the genuinely independent that *both starts from itself* and is the *final causality* at work awakening the subjective elevation. It is this immanence of the whole in its members that evokes and awakens the elevation to God, in which utter dependence coincides with freedom—to be at home with self in one's other.

The presence of the whole in its members gradually becomes explicit in the elevation, as that which is in and for itself, the absolutely necessary. The absolutely necessary becomes manifest in the reversion of the contingent to its truth and foundation; this reversion is a counterstroke (*Gegenschlag*) directed against the separation of its two sides, unifying them into one, and against the appearance that the whole is a *dependent* result.[198] This affirmative union in difference validates the finite and is manifest in the refusal of the human heart to be deprived of the fact of elevation. That refusal is not simply arbitrary subjective stubbornness or pathology. Hegel dismisses such views of religion as a "silly idealism that imagines that if anything is thought it ceases to be."[199]

[195] *LProofs*, 106. Independence and mediation by other do not contradict each other because they are united in the one necessity to which they both belong. The doctrine of the ideality of the finite—its ontological status within the true infinite—is not reducible to abstract identity, but preserves its distinction *from* the infinite *in* the infinite. That is why the "ideality of the finite is the most important proposition of philosophy. . . . The basic concept of philosophy—the true infinite—depends on it" (*EL* §95R).

[196] *LProofs*, 125. Cf. *LPR* 1. 307–9.

[197] *LProofs*, 91.

[198] *LProofs*, 165.

[199] *LProofs*, 165.

Hegel's thesis is that the elevation, like religion itself, is a relation of spirit to spirit. Like his better-known account of mutual recognition, the mutual mediation of infinite and finite produces and results in a unity in and through difference that is community. In the foregoing account we have examined the mutual qualification of both finite (its self-sublation) and infinite (its concrete identity which validates the finite and achieves an immanence in the finite as the final cause eliciting and arousing the elevation). It has become clear that the true infinite is a social–communal infinite. Hegel elaborates on the communal nature of the knowledge of God and the nature of divine–human community in his *Lectures on the Proofs*:

> The object of our concern, the community and communion of God and humanity, is a community of spirit with spirit . . . It is a community, and this very circumstance involves the difficulty of at once maintaining the *difference* and of defining it in such a way as to *preserve* the communion. That humanity knows God implies, in accord with the essence of community, a communal knowledge. That is to say, humanity knows God only insofar as God knows godself in humanity. This knowledge is God's self-consciousness, but it is at the same time a knowledge of God on the part of humanity; and this knowledge of God by humanity is the knowledge of humanity by God. The spirit of humanity—to know God—is simply God's spirit itself. It is here that questions regarding the freedom of humanity, the union of humanity's individual knowledge and consciousness with the knowledge by which humanity is in communion with God, and the knowledge of God in humanity, come to be discussed.[200]

This important passage sounds like a programmatic statement that Hegel intended to amplify or carry out in the lectures. Moreover, in it Hegel refers to the Göschel aphorisms, which he cited in his 1830 *Encyclopedia*: "God is only God to the extent that God knows godself; God's self-knowing is, further, a self-consciousness in humanity and humanity's knowledge of God, which proceeds to humanity's self-knowing in God."[201]

However, Hegel disappoints the hope for a further development of these programmatic statements concerning community as involving a complex series of mediations. Specifically, Hegel's claim that the knowledge of God on the part of humanity implies a reciprocal exchange—the knowledge of humanity by God—which is constitutive of spirit, raises issues and invites questions; however, entering into these would also change and unduly broaden Hegel's project. "This fullness of relationship between the human spirit and God is not however our subject. We have to take up this relationship only in its most abstract aspect, namely in the form of the connection of the finite with

[200] *LProofs*, 126.

[201] *LProofs*, 65 n. Hegel reviewed these aphorisms, and his review is available in translation in *MW*.

the infinite."[202] Hegel's agenda here is the proofs and what calls forth the endeavor of proof. Moreover, Hegel repeatedly indicates that narrowing the focus to the relation of contingency and necessity is justified because this relation includes and sums up all the relations between finite and infinite.[203] Does it include reciprocal recognition? Apparently. Hegel's position is that there is no unbridgeable gulf between finite and infinite. He claims that the concept (that is, the totality) that removes the gulf between finite and infinite, and reconciles their opposition, is the logical basis for thinking the mutual exchange inherent in reciprocal recognition, and religion as a reciprocal relation of spirit to spirit.[204] This concept is the true infinite or spirit.[205]

11. NOTE ON TELEOLOGY AND TELEOLOGICAL PROOF

There is one feature not explicitly mentioned by Hegel but that nevertheless deserves underscoring: Hegel's account of the elevation of spirit to God is teleological. However, the teleology at work here is the speculative teleology of inner purposiveness, and not the external means–end teleology of the traditional metaphysical proof. It is important to appreciate Hegel's distinction between external teleology, in which means and end are separate and externally related, and teleology in the sense of inner purposiveness or organism. The latter is the terminology by which Kant retrieved Aristotle's concept of entelechy. "The category of life by Aristotle already includes inner purposiveness; hence it stands infinitely far above the concept of modern teleology which had only finite or external purposiveness in view."[206] Inner purposiveness augments the importance of final causality in comparison with efficient causality, because it requires a holistic interpretation and because it is more closely connected with freedom: the purpose contains within itself the determinacy of the end:

> In this way the purpose does not pass over [into its effect as does efficient causality], but preserves itself in its operation; i.e., it brings only itself about and is at the end what it was in the beginning or in its origin: what is truly original

[202] *E.* §552; *LProofs*, 126; see also p. 65, where he indicates that in these lectures he will not expand the treatment of the elevation into the detailed discussion that Göschel's aphorisms and communal knowing would require.

[203] *LProofs*, 99. [204] *LPR* 1. 383.

[205] See Williams, "Hegel's Concept of the True Infinite," and "Hegel's True Infinity as Panentheism." Cf. Ch. 5, Sect. 3, Ch. 6, Sects 6–9.

[206] *EL* §204. While Hegel praises Kant for retrieving inner purposiveness, he criticizes Kant's general interpretation of teleology and mechanism as merely subjective maxims of judgment, charging that Kant's "critical treatment" surrenders the truth question. Cf. *SL* 737–9.

> comes to be only through this self-preservation. The purpose requires a speculative interpretation, as the concept . . . [207]

In other words, inner purposiveness implies organism, in which the end brings forth the means and the means brings forth the end. Such inner purposiveness is equivalent to the self-maintenance of a whole. Hegel offers a concise example and explanation of the speculative teleology in the following passage:

> It can therefore be said of the teleological activity that in it the end is the beginning, the consequent the ground, the effect the cause, that it is a becoming of what has become, that in it only what already exists comes into existence, and so forth; which means that in general *all the determinations of relationship belonging to the sphere of reflection or of immediate being have lost their distinctions, and what was enunciated as an other, such as end, consequent, effect, etc., no longer has in the end relation the determination of an other, but on the contrary is posited as identical with the simple Concept*.[208]

Speculative teleology deconstructs the categories, terms, and relations of the understanding—for example, abstract identity, law of contradiction, external relations, mechanism, and so on. In contrast to external means–end teleology, teleological activity for Hegel means the self-maintenance and self-preservation of an articulated whole. In the latter case, whole and parts are inseparable, both end and means, not an external teleology in which the end and means are separate. Indeed, both the dialectical self-sublation of finitude whereby it withdraws into its ground, and the *causa sui*, which collapses the ordinary category of cause and effect, resolve contradictions that the understanding treats as final, by showing that the terms that contradict each other are related. Contradiction is a form of relation. For these reasons the elevation of spirit and its object—absolute necessity—cannot be expressed or understood in propositions and syllogisms of the understanding. Conversely, since it treats contradiction as a final limit, the understanding cannot understand life or living organisms, much less spirit.

For Hegel, spirit proves to be the truth of the idea of life (entelechy), and this implies that spirit requires a holistic interpretation that is both speculative and teleological.[209] Hegel's account of elevation draws upon this speculative teleological holism, and the concept of the true infinite is its speculative nucleus.

In view of the foregoing analysis, it is interesting but also puzzling to examine Hegel's account of the teleological argument from the 1831 *Lectures*

[207] *EL* §204. [208] *SL* 748; emphasis added.

[209] *SL* 780. Hegel points out that the *Logic* considers the logical dimension of spirit, and that spirit has other shapes as well, which are considered in the concrete sciences of spirit—soul, consciousness, and spirit as such.

on the Philosophy of Religion. Several points are worth noting briefly. First, in this lecture Hegel proceeds historically, not systematically—that is, he discusses and treats the traditional metaphysical teleological proof. Second, some examples of teleological argument Hegel discusses are external means–end teleology. Many of these types of arguments Hegel considers discredited, little more than pious views of nature.[210] Third, while Hegel does mention internal purposiveness, he treats it merely historically, not systematically or in relation to the elevation. Thus, when internal purposiveness is introduced, it is developed to and extends only as far as the category of life in Plato and Aristotle—that is, the ancient term *Nous*.[211] Given his historical mode of treatment, it comes as no surprise that Hegel claims that, since this account of the internal purposiveness of the absolute reaches only the category of life, it falls short of spirit, and absolute spirit. Fourth, the introduction of the category of the highest good and its realization transcends the possible empirical verification that is the standpoint of the proof. This shows that Hegel here is considering the teleological proof simply as if it were a traditional cosmological argument with an empirical premise, reasoning from a particular cosmological feature (purposes) taken as effect to God as cause. But, since within experience good is opposed to and limited by evil, the achievement of good purposes are always partial, limited by opposites. The best that could be achieved with such an empirical argument is a more or less plausible conclusion to relative wisdom, but not to absolute wisdom.

Here Hegel appears to agree with Kant's interpretation of the limitations of the proof. The strongest conclusion concerning the realization of final purpose from empirical premises remains an ought to be; it is an absolute postulate, but a postulate nevertheless.[212] However, if the empirically observed premises are extrapolated to infinity, both sides of the opposition must be taken into account. Thus the proper extrapolation here is not to the triumph of one side over the other—for example, of good over evil, but rather to the pessimistic, if not despairing, conclusion that the opposition between good and evil must go on forever.[213] This dualism points to the need for a transition to a higher category and perspective. However, this transition to higher perspective is itself teleological. But what is this teleology? One is tempted to say it must be teleology in the sense of inner purposiveness such as Kant's doctrine of the postulates of practical reason, or even further to a distinction of religion from morality. But in this lecture Hegel leaves even this inner purposiveness at the level of nature, the ancient *Nous*, rather than spirit.

Hegel's treatment of the teleological proof is less appreciative and more critical than Kant's. It is also the case that Hegel's historical mode of considering the traditional proof brackets his own concept of spirit, inner

[210] *LProofs*, 181; cf. *LPR* 1. 99.
[211] *LProofs*, 180–1.
[212] *LProofs*, 182; cf. *LPR* 2. 421, 752.
[213] *LProofs*, 180–3.

purposiveness, the elevation of spirit to God, and so on, and considers teleology merely as an objective cosmological feature of things—for example, even inner purposiveness is treated as if it were external cosmological teleology. The restrictions inherent in Hegel's historical treatment block consideration of inner purposiveness and freedom as starting points of the elevation of spirit. Consequently, this proof not only falls short of absolute necessity; it cannot function as an elevation, because the starting point of the elevation is spirit and freedom, and these have been bracketed and/or restricted to merely naturalistic treatment.

Hegel ignores the point that he makes in his *Lectures on the Proofs*—to wit:

> the concept is not simply submerged in objectivity, as it is when, as *end*, *it is merely the determination of things*. Rather the concept is *for itself*, *existing independently* of objectivity. Regarded in this way, the concept is itself the starting point, and its transition has a distinctive determination of its own . . . "[214]

In the former case, the concept is naturalized, but, in the latter case, the concept is free for itself and has a drive towards self-actualization and freedom. Peter Hodgson correctly notes that the distinctive determination Hegel is referring to is probably the ontological proof.[215] But there is no way to get from the empirical teleological proof of the 1831 *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* to the ontological proof, because in the former Hegel brackets both the internal purposiveness of spirit by which it is supposed to transcend nature and natural life, and the higher standpoint of the concept, which is *for itself*, and, in the ontological proof, moves from the concept of God to God's existence without any empirical premises.

On the other hand, in his account of the elevation of spirit to God, Hegel removes the brackets on both internal purposiveness of spirit and the ontological proof. For, as Hegel says, the starting point of the elevation is not with any particular cosmological feature such as contingency or purposiveness, but with spirit itself as the inclusive term of finitude, for it is spirit, not simply nature or natural necessity, that produces the elevation that religion is.[216] Since necessity has its truth in freedom, and nature has its truth in spirit, with freedom and spirit we enter the region of the concept.[217] Hegel acknowledges that Kant got the starting point of the elevation to God right when he identified it with practical reason and the consciousness of freedom; but Kant ruined his discovery with his doctrine of postulates of morality. These postulates confine the elevation to finitude, where it can at most point towards

[214] *LProofs*, 100. [215] *LProofs*, 100 n. 15.

[216] *E.* §552; *LProofs*, 95. This does not mean that elevation is the self-bootstrapping of finite spirit, because there is an important reversal (discussed below) that sublates Kant's transcendental standpoint.

[217] *LProofs*, 99.

a spurious infinite that merely ought to be.[218] On the other hand, Hegel's account of elevation aims beyond the spurious infinite that ought to be, to the true and genuine infinite. In the elevation, finite spirit makes the discovery, which is also a reversal, that the true infinite, which appears to be a mediated result of the elevation and the self-sublation of finite spirit, "casts off its position as result and develops a counterthrust"[219] against its apparent mediation and derivation, so that the starting point of the elevation "is reduced from an immediate to a posited status, so that absolute spirit is what is true."[220] In this reversal, the true infinite is "*this thing in and for itself, which is the power flowing through and within us, which arouses this movement within us*."[221] However, Hegel's treatment of the 1831 teleological proof stops short of this speculative ontotheological reversal.

12. CONCLUSION: THE SPECULATIVE RECONSTRUCTION OF INSTINCTUAL REASON

Hegel's analysis of the fact of religion—the elevation of spirit to God—includes a critique of the traditional logical categories and metaphysics used in the formulation of the classical proofs, and an interpretation and reconstruction of the fact as mediated by categories of a vital dialectical holism. Hegel's analysis is radical and unsparing in its critique of traditional Western substance metaphysics for distorting religion and separating it from its object by removing that object into abstract transcendence.[222] Yet his reconstruction is conservative with respect to the *Sache selbst* of religion, what religion is about. This point can be illustrated by a comparison of Kant's and Hegel's views concerning the natural logic at work in the cosmological argument.

In Hegel's view, Kant was his most insightful in calling attention to the "natural course of reasoning" in the cosmological argument. However, from the standpoint of critical pure reason, Kant dismisses this natural bent of the mind, or natural logic, as spurious, sophistic reasoning. Instead of connecting us with the things themselves, Kant believes that, when viewed critically, natural logic cuts us off from them.[223] As Hegel sees it, natural logic is the activity of thought that is at work in all our ideas, purposes, interests, and actions, although it is unconsciously busy.[224] As unconscious, the natural logic

[218] *E.* §552. [219] *LPR* 1. 322. [220] *LPR* 1. 322. Cf. *SL* 443.

[221] *LProofs*, 131, translation modified; emphasis added.

[222] "In the very act of keeping the infinite pure and aloof from the finite, the infinite is only made finite" (*SL* 137).

[223] *SL* 35–6. Hegel's remarks on natural logic in the second preface to *SL* are relevant here for understanding his disagreement with Kant and with traditional logic.

[224] *SL* 36.

of spontaneous instinctual reason cannot be taken as immediately true, but it should not simply be dismissed as error. The basis of this pre-conscious natural logic is "the pure concept [*Begriff*] which is the very heart of things, their simple life-pulse. . . . To focus attention on this *logical* nature which animates spirit, moves and works in it, this is the task. . . . The loftier business of logic is to clarify these categories and in them to raise spirit to freedom and truth."[225] Further, "This concept is not sensuously intuited or represented; it is an object, product and content of thinking, the absolute self-subsistent object [*Sache*], the *logos*, the reason of that which is, the truth of . . . things; it is least of all the *logos* which should be left outside the science of logic."[226]

In view of Hegel's remarks about instinctual natural logic that is unconsciously busy, we do well to ponder his comments about the idealism of life and the idealism of philosophy in his *Aesthetics*:

> the power of life, and still more the might of spirit, consists precisely in positing contradiction in itself, enduring it and overcoming it. This positing and resolving of the contradiction between the ideal unity and the real separatedness of the members constitutes the constant process of life, and life is only by being a process. . . . This is the *idealism of life*. For philosophy is not at all the only example of idealism; nature, as life, already makes a matter of fact what idealist philosophy brings to completion in its own spiritual field.[227]

Nature, as life, by positing contradiction, enduring it, and overcoming it, makes a matter of fact what idealist philosophy brings to completion in its own spiritual field. This sounds like a philosophy of organism that has its origins in Kant's *Third Critique*, and that by positing, enduring, and overcoming contradictions, also overcomes the rigid dualisms and dichotomies of the first two *Critiques*. The instinctual reason pre-consciously busy in the process of life makes a matter of fact what idealist philosophy (to wit, Hegel's speculative re-enactment of instinctual reason) brings to completion in its own spiritual field—namely, by transforming the fact of religion into a fact comprehended in its necessity by spirit.

Hegel agrees with Kant that the categories of logic—natural or reflective—must be criticized; he disagrees with Kant's method of criticism that separates the categories as purely formal, from the content that is to be thought in and through them. This separation buries the crucial point that the content to be thought by us through the categories we impose on it *already* possesses a logical import of its own. Moreover, the separation of form from content also generates the impossible demand of Kant's critique: To know before you know. This separation has to be overcome: "the activity of the forms of thinking and the critique of them, must be united within the process of cognition."[228] In other words, "to learn how to swim one must go into the

[225] *SL* 37. [226] *SL* 39. [227] *Aesthetics*, 1. 120. [228] *EL* §41Z1.

water."[229] Dialectic effects the union of form and content in the process of cognition, and it opens up a wider agenda for logical criticism than justifying natural science alone, one that includes religious and theological content. For example,

> It is the requirement and the business of logical thinking to enquire into just this, whether . . . a finite without infinity is something true, or whether . . . an abstract infinity, also a content without form and a form without content, an inner by itself which has no outer expression, an externality without an inwardness, whether any of these is *something true* or *something actual*.[230]

Hegel's comments on the cosmological argument have to be understood in light of his view of the task of logic to focus on the spirit that animates the instinctive reasoning of natural logic (which Kant acknowledges to be present in the proof) and to uncover and reconstruct explicitly its logical import. For Hegel, this proof is to be regarded as nothing other than

> the endeavor to bring to consciousness what the inner and purely rational element of the movement is in itself that in its subjective aspect is called religious elevation. Even if this movement, precisely in the form of the understanding in which we have seen it, is not comprehended as it is in and for itself, the content that forms its basis loses nothing.[231]

On the contrary,

> It is this content that penetrates the imperfection of the form and exercises its power, or rather is the actual and substantial power itself. Religious elevation consequently recognizes itself in this imperfect expression and is aware of its inner, true meaning over against the curtailment of it in the manner of the syllogism of the understanding. This is why, as Kant says "This course of reasoning . . . is the most convincing not only for common sense but even for speculative understanding. It also sketches the first outlines of all the proofs in natural theology, outlines that have always been and always will he followed, however much embellished and disguised by superfluous additions."[232]

Hegel finds in the elevation itself a rational content that penetrates even its imperfect forms in the defective traditional arguments. Kant appears to get this when he says that this natural course of reasoning is the most convincing for common sense and even for speculative reason, and that it always is and always will be followed, because it provides the first outlines of the proofs in natural theology.

Despite this, Kant ends by dismissing the argument—both its traditional form and its natural logic—as metaphysical illusion. Kant's view of the natural logic as both revelatory and illusory is incoherent. In contrast, Hegel believes

[229] *LPR* 1. 139. [230] *SL* 42. [231] *LProofs*, 166.
[232] *LProofs*, 166. The Kant passage is *First Critique*, B632.

that the religious elevation recognizes itself in imperfect expression in the cosmological proof, and is aware of its inner true meaning over and against the distortion and curtailment of it in the syllogism of the understanding. That meaning is itself dialectical and requires a speculative dialectical interpretation.

Although it begins in immediacy, the elevation is nonetheless mediated by abstract thought-determinations implicit in finitude, including finitude's immanent nullity, which is suppressed by the understanding and abstract identity. This suppression supports the modern view that the finite is foundational for the infinite and leads to Kant's mistaken doctrine of God as postulate of practical reason. Hegel observes that both the contingent finite and the infinite absolute necessity require speculative dialectical interpretation. The finite sublates its inner nullity and withdraws into its ground, the absolutely necessary. Absolute necessity, as *causa sui*, involves a dialectical destruction of the traditional cause–effect relationship, and is better understood as a lower stage of a more concrete dialectical holism in which substance becomes subject and the final goal is freedom, the truth of necessity.[233] Hegel observes that, for these dialectical forms and negations of both infinite and finite life, including the elevation of spirit to God,

> the form of the syllogism of the understanding has no place. It is not in a position to express its rational content; and since *religious elevation is the rational content itself*, it cannot find satisfaction in that form of the understanding, for *there is more in religious elevation than this form can grasp.* It is therefore of itself of no mean importance that Kant has robbed the so-called proofs of the existence of God of the reputation they had, making of their inadequacy (it must nonetheless be said) nothing more than something taken for granted. However, his criticism of the proofs is itself inadequate on its own account, and in addition *he failed to recognize their deeper foundation and so was unable to do justice to their true content. At the same time he laid the basis for the complete paralysis of reason, which has since his day been content to be nothing more than an immediate knowing.*[234]

Kant's restriction of cognition and his interpretation of religion—theology as a postulate of practical reason that expresses a moral faith—prepared the way for Jacobi and immediate knowing. Kant opened the door to psychological interpretations of metaphysics, non-cognitive interpretations of religion, and dogmatic claims to immediate knowing as the exclusive form of "truth."

Hegel closes the "Fragment on the Cosmological Proof" with references to Kant's critique of the proof, which senses, but fails to pursue and understand, its deeper significance, and to Jacobi's dismissal of reason and the theological proofs in favor of "immediate knowledge which speaks while its mouth is full of the fruit of the tree of knowledge."[235] Both Kant and Jacobi follow the restrictive logic of the understanding to the point of its self-subversion. Kant

[233] *EL* §§158–9. [234] *LProofs*, 163; emphasis added. [235] *LProofs*, 64.

removes the inner necessity either into a purely subjective psychological necessity of our thought that is divorced from things, or into the abstract Beyond of metaphysical illusion, but also seeks to recover it as a subjective postulate of morality—whose objective content contradicts its subjective form. Jacobi believes that to prove this necessity is to condition it, make it derivative from what mediates it, and thus is sacrilege. Neither Kant nor Jacobi grasps or appreciates the negative and the affirmative aspects of the necessities immanent in the fact of elevation, or that the self-sublation of the finite is the mediation that sublates mediation. Hegel concludes:

> And I add, it is possible, by following the understanding, entirely to miss the content contained in these outlines and to imagine that they have been formally refuted by the critical understanding—or, in virtue of the lack of understanding and the lack of reason characteristic of so-called immediate knowledge, to throw them aside unrefuted in a grand way or to ignore them.[236]

[236] *LProofs*, 64.

3

The Ontological Proof

1. KANT'S ATTACK ON THE ONTOLOGICAL PROOF

To put it mildly, Kant views the ontological proof unfavorably. In his view, it inverts the procedure of the natural logic wherein the mind ascends from contingent finite beings to an absolutely necessary being. Instead, the ontological proof begins with the concept of God, and attempts to infer its existence from the concept alone. Kant regards this starting point as "a mere scholastic innovation" that displaces the natural logic. It would never have been attempted save for the need of proving the necessary being that is the goal of the ascent:

> This natural procedure of Reason was concealed from view, and instead of ending with this concept [of the absolutely necessary], the attempt was made to begin with it, and so to deduce from it that necessity of existence which it was only fitted to complete. Thus arose the unfortunate ontological proof, which yields satisfaction neither to the natural and healthy understanding nor to the more academic demands of strict proof.[1]

Kant dismisses the proof as follows: "To attempt to pluck [*ausklauben*] from a merely arbitrarily constructed idea the existence of an object corresponding to it is a quite unnatural procedure and a mere innovation of scholastic subtlety."[2] For Kant the idea from which the existence of the object is supposed to be "plucked" is a mere "verbal definition of the concept" that "yields no insight into the conditions which make it necessary to regard the non-existence of a thing as absolutely unthinkable."[3] Kant comes to the pessimistic conclusion that the concept of "unconditioned necessity, which we so indispensably require as the last bearer of things, is for human reason the veritable abyss."[4]

[1] *First Critique*, A603/B631–A604/B632.

[2] *First Critique*, A603/B631. I have altered the Kemp Smith translation. Kant's German is if anything even more dismissive than in translation: "Es war etwas ganz Unnatürliches und einer Blöße Neuerung des Schulwitzes, aus seiner ganz willkürlich entworfen Idee das Dasein des ihr entsprechenden Gegenstandes selbst ausklauben zu wollen."

[3] *First Critique*, A593/B 621.

[4] *First Critique*, A613/B641.

Kant is concerned with the issue of transcendental illusion and illicit hypostatization of what, in his view, is at most an idea or regulative concept. As he worked on the transcendental dialectic section of the *First Critique*, he moved from engaging in discussions about the unconditioned interpreted as necessary being, to wondering whether, in thinking the unconditioned, "I am still thinking anything in the concept . . . or perhaps nothing at all."[5] To be sure, the concept of the unconditioned is one that human reason spontaneously brings forth. But it is a priori, and, since reason in its logical use is merely formal,[6] Kant is concerned whether, in thinking the unconditioned as *ens realissimum* and inferring its necessary existence, we hypostatize a purely empty and formal idea. If that is true, we fall into transcendental illusion.[7]

On a lower level, Kant observes that geometrical examples of necessity—to wit, that a triangle must have three angles—have been taken as justifying speaking of an object that lies entirely outside the sphere of the understanding as if we understood what it is. For example, if there is a triangle, it must have three angles, and so on. However, we do not infer the existence of the triangle from the necessity of its having three angles. Its existence is not necessary, but contingent and conditional, merely possible. On the other hand, Descartes constructs the proof: (1) The idea of God is the idea of a supremely perfect being that possesses all perfections. (2) Existence is a perfection. (3) If God does not exist, then a supremely perfect being would not possess all perfections, which is a contradiction. (4) Therefore God exists. Kant observes that such an example is "taken from *judgments*, not from *things* and their existence. The unconditional necessity of judgments is not the same as the absolute necessity of things. The absolute necessity of judgment is only a conditioned necessity of the thing . . . "[8] The Cartesian proof would be well founded only if God's existence were likewise *given*, but that is precisely the point at issue. For Kant something more than a subjective necessity of judgment is necessary to establish existence.[9]

The rationalists were confident that the law of contradiction, or logical possibility, was a sufficient test to determine possibility and existence. Something is logically possible provided that it can be shown to contain no contradiction. Kant is critical of such rationalistic confidence because it

[5] *First Critique*, A593/B 621. [6] *Commentary*, 450.

[7] We return to Kant's and Hegel's opposing views of dialectic and "illusion" in Section 7 of this chapter.

[8] *First Critique*, A594/B622.

[9] To be sure, Descartes makes the same point in a different way and reaches a different conclusion, that the subjective necessity of thought does not impose necessity on things or bring it about that God really exists, "but on the contrary . . . *the necessity which lies in the thing itself*, i.e., the necessity of the existence of God, determines me to think in this way" (*Meditations* V, in *The Philosophical Works of Descartes*, trans. E. S. Haldane and G. R. T. Ross (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 1. 180–2).

confuses the subjective necessity of our thought with the absolute necessity of things.[10] Kant believes that the ontological proof moves entirely at the level of ideas, and never reaches the level of existence. Kant agrees with Hume that "all existential propositions are synthetic,"[11] that all matters of fact are contingent, and the opposite of every matter of fact is possible. If that is so, "how can we profess to maintain that the predicate of existence cannot be rejected without contradiction? This is a feature which is found only in a priori propositions and is what constitutes their analytic character."[12] In an analytic proposition, if we affirm the subject and reject the predicate, a contradiction arises. But, if we reject both the subject and the predicate together, we avoid contradiction. The only way to avoid this conclusion would be to argue that there are subjects that cannot be removed and must always be. That, however, would only be another way of saying that there are necessary subjects, but that is the point in question.[13]

Kant clarifies what is at stake in the distinction between logical possibility and real possibility by pointing out the limits of logical possibility on which rationalists have relied. A concept free from internal contradiction may nevertheless be an empty illusory one and lack objective reality:

> A concept is always possible if it is not self-contradictory. This is the logical criterion of possibility and by it the object of the concept is distinguishable from the *nihil negativum*. But it may nonetheless be an empty concept, unless the objective reality of the synthesis through which the concept is generated has been specifically proved; and such proof . . . rests on principles of possible experience, and not on the principle of analysis (the law of contradiction). This is a warning against arguing directly from the logical possibility of concepts to the real possibility of things.[14]

To make this general point sharper, Kant notes that "the illusion which is caused by the confusion of a logical with a real (existential) predicate is almost beyond correction. Anything we please can be made to serve as a logical predicate; a subject can even be predicated of itself; for logic abstracts from all content."[15]

[10] *First Critique*, A593/B621.
[11] *First Critique*, A598/B626.
[12] *First Critique*, A598/B626.
[13] *First Critique*, A596/B624.
[14] *First Critique*, A597/B625.
[15] *First Critique*, A598/B626. It is surprising that, while Kant characterizes Descartes's defense of the argument as much labor lost (A602/B630), he does not charge Descartes with transcendental illusion. Descartes, who first formulated the issue of transcendental illusion in the evil deceiver hypothesis in the *First Meditation*, expressly invokes and defends the argument against possible illusion or subjective interpretation when he writes: "While from the fact that I cannot conceive God without existence, it follows that existence is inseparable from him, and hence that he really exists; not that my thought can bring this to pass or impose any necessity on things, but, on the contrary, because the necessity which lies in the thing itself, i.e., the necessity of the existence of God, determines me to think in this way. For it is not in my power to think of God without existence (that is, of a supremely perfect being devoid of supreme perfection) though it is in my power to imagine a horse with wings or without wings" (Descartes, *Meditation* V, in *Philosophical Works of Descartes*, trans. E. S. Haldane and G. R. T. Ross (Cambridge: Cambridge

Kant claims famously that being is a logical, not a real, predicate. A real predicate adds something to the concept of a thing. But being, as a logical predicate, "is merely the positing of a thing . . . Logically it is merely the copula of a judgment. . . . The . . . word 'is' adds no new predicate."[16] To illustrate his point, Kant offers the following notorious example:

> A hundred real dollars do not contain the least coin more than a hundred possible dollars. For as the latter signify the concept, and the former the object and the positing of the concept, should the former contain more than the latter, my concept would not in that case express the whole object, and would not therefore be an adequate concept of it. My financial position is, however, affected very differently by a hundred real dollars than it is by the mere concept of them (i.e., of their possibility).[17]

Similarly, in reference to the ontological proof, Kant applies the distinction between real possibility and logical possibility thus: thinking a concept, determining that it is free from contradiction (logical possibility), is insufficient to determine that an object corresponding to the concept exists.

> If we think in a thing every feature of reality except one, the missing reality is not added by my saying that this defective thing exists. On the contrary, it exists with the same defect. . . . When therefore I think a being as supreme reality without any defect, the question remains whether it exists or not.[18]

There is an additional consideration concerning existence claims besides logical possibility—namely, the object must be one that can be *given* within the unity of possible experience:

> here we find the source of our present difficulty. *Were we dealing with an object of the senses, we could not confound the existence of the thing with the mere concept of it.* For through the concept the object is thought only as conforming to the universal conditions of possible empirical knowledge in general, whereas through its existence it is thought as belonging to the context of experience as a whole.[19]

For Kant it is the test of possible experience that qualifies the synthesis of object with concept in all possible judgments of existence. This means that all judgments of existence are, as Hume claimed, contingent, and the opposite of

University Press, 1967). Although Kant declares that Descartes's ontological argument is unsuccessful, not only because existence is not a real predicate but also because the argument is transcendental illusion, it is puzzling that Kant does not even attempt to establish that there is a confusion of the subjective necessity of thought with the objective necessity of things in Descartes's case. If Descartes's argument is for Kant labor lost, Kant's dismissal of Descartes appears to be labor avoided. The objective idealist in Kant might have been tempted by Descartes, were it not for the skeptic in Kant siding with Hume's thesis that existence-claims are matters of fact—i.e., empirical.

[16] *First Critique*, A598/B626.
[17] *First Critique*, A599/B627.
[18] *First Critique*, A600/B628.
[19] *First Critique*, A601/B629; emphasis added.

any matter of fact, or contingent judgment thereof, is always possible without contradiction.

Since questions of existence cannot be settled or justified on the basis of concepts alone as the ontological proof appears to do, the proof fails. Since the ontological proof is for Kant the only real proof, if it fails then the question of divine existence cannot be answered, much less settled at all. The impossibility of the ontological proof is at the same time the destruction of theology as metaphysics and metaphysics as theology.

> Whatever . . . and however much our *concept* of an object may contain, we must go outside of it, if we are to ascribe existence to the object. In the case of objects of the senses, this takes place through their connection with . . . our perceptions . . . *But in dealing with objects of pure thought, we have no means whatsoever of knowing their existence, since it would have to be known in a completely a priori manner. Our consciousness of all existence . . . belongs exclusively to the unity of experience; any alleged existence outside this field, while not indeed such as we can declare to be absolutely impossible, is . . . an assumption which we can never be in a position to justify.*[20]

Kant concludes that "all attempts to employ reason in theology in any merely speculative manner are altogether fruitless, null and void . . . Consequently the only theology of reason possible is that which is based upon moral laws."[21] Freedom, God, and Immortality are postulates of practical reason. But of these the only one that is immanent and constitutive is the postulate of freedom. To be sure, freedom is supposed to provide access to the others, but only for practical purposes. This qualification means that the content of the postulates remains subjective. The doctrine of the postulates is qualified by the negative doctrine of the *First Critique*, which establishes that the cognition of God is not even possible. But from this it does not follow that for Kant God is dead, because, while the existence of God cannot be proven, neither can it be disproven, but becomes an object of moral faith.

2. HEGEL ON ANSELM'S PROOF: ITS DISTORTION BY CLASSICAL METAPHYSICS

Unlike Kant, Hegel actually read Anselm (albeit in excerpts). This made a world of difference: where Kant dismisses the general idea of an ontological proof as a mere scholastic innovation, and for being a merely arbitrarily constructed fictitious idea from which the existence of an object corresponding

[20] *First Critique*, A601/B 629; emphasis added.
[21] *First Critique*, A636/B664.

to it is to be extracted like a rabbit from a magician's hat, Hegel makes the opposite case:

> Every attempt to discredit the so-called ontological proof and Anselm's definition of perfection is futile, because these are present in every unprejudiced human mind, and because the proof keeps coming back in every philosophy, even against its wit and will, as in the principle of immediate faith.[22]

Hegel's first point is that Anselm's formulations attempt to identify and express what a religiously adequate "object" must be—that is, unsurpassable.[23] His second point is that the import and results of what Anselm discovered, despite repeated refutations, keep coming back in every philosophy even against its will. Where Kant sees only an arbitrarily constructed subjective fiction, Hegel discovers a self-maintaining logical necessity on which everything, including not only religion but also philosophy itself, ultimately depends. To be sure, he also discovers defects in Anselm's otherwise "remarkable proof," which he will attempt to correct and fix.

In Chapter 2 we discovered that Hegel recasts the traditional theological proofs as elevation of subjective spirit to God. It is the natural, spontaneous elevation of spirit that invites the endeavor of proof, and that for Hegel serves not only to predelineate the outlines followed by the proofs, but also as the criterion for ascertaining the distortions of the proofs introduced by traditional logic and metaphysics. Further, we discovered that the ontological proof, which Hegel associates historically and philosophically with Christianity, constitutes the object and goal of the elevation—to wit, the absolutely necessary. It should come as no surprise to find that Hegel claims that the ontological proof has not escaped from the defects of classical logic and metaphysics that have distorted it. The logic and metaphysics available to Anselm introduced distortions of his thought that are not only magnified in subsequent metaphysical elaboration and discussions, but also make Anselm's proof vulnerable to later critiques presented by Kant and Jacobi.

Hegel writes:

> the whole style of previous metaphysics, its method included, has been exploded by Kant and Jacobi. Kant in his own manner has shown that the content of that metaphysics leads by strict demonstration to *antinomies*... but he has not

[22] *EL* §193R; my translation.

[23] See J. N. Findlay, "Can God's Existence be Disproved?" in A. Plantinga (ed.), *The Ontological Argument* (New York: Doubleday, 1965), 111–22. After reviewing how Anselm correctly identified the features such a religiously adequate "object" must possess, Findlay claims that those very features demonstrate the impossibility of the existence of that object. Anselm's proof thus constitutes a disproof of its "object," because it violates the modern doctrine that all existential assertions are contingent. Charles Hartshorne later convinced Findlay that his argument against the proof allowed a further reversal: that is, if God can be thought at all—as Kant clearly allows, given his distinction between thinking and knowing—then God must necessarily exist. God's existence is either necessary or utterly impossible.

> reflected on the nature of this demonstration itself that is linked to a finite content; yet the two must stand or fall together. . . . If Kant attacked previous metaphysics with respect to its content, Jacobi has attacked it chiefly with respect to its method of demonstration, and has signalized most clearly and profoundly the essential point, namely, that a method of demonstration such as this is fast bound within the circle of the rigid necessity of the finite, and that *freedom*, that is, the *concept*, and with it *everything that is true*, lies beyond it and is unattainable by it. According to the Kantian result, it is the peculiar matter of metaphysics that leads it into contradictions and the inadequacy of cognition consists in its [finite] *subjectivity*. According to Jacobi's result, the fault lies with the method and the entire nature of cognition itself, which only apprehends a connection of *conditionedness* and *dependence* and therefore proves itself inadequate to what is absolutely true, i.e., what is in and for itself. In point of fact, as the principle of philosophy is the *infinite free concept*, and all its content rests on that alone, the method proper to concept-less finitude is inappropriate to it. . . . Consequently the concept . . . which is the infinite in and for itself, is excluded from this cognition.[24]

Hegel regards classical metaphysics as dogmatic partly because it applied finite categories to the infinite, partly because it did not examine the categories critically, and partly because its dogmatism became metaphysical positivism, which purifies and hypostatizes terms such as"being" and "reality" and purges them of negation and determinacy. Such positivism assumes that "reality" survives when all negation is thought away, not realizing that to exclude negation is to do away with all determinateness.[25] Thus the Cartesian version of the ontological proof defined God as the sum total of all realities. But such a concept "is just as devoid of all determinateness and content as the empty absolute in which all is one."[26] Thus Kant's doubts as to whether the term "unconditioned" has any meaning at all appear justified.

However, while Kant's critique "made an end of the metaphysic of the understanding as an objective dogmatism . . . *it merely transformed it into a subjective dogmatism*, i.e., into a consciousness in which these same finite determinations of the understanding persist . . . "[27] Kant's subjective dogmatism treats the transcendent ideas of reason as merely subjective "because it has once and for all accepted finite knowledge as the fixed and ultimate standpoint,"[28] thereby falling into the spurious infinity of the ought to be. Further, Kant's subjective dogmatism implies that concepts without intuitions are empty; it is impossible to "pluck" being or existence from such empty formal concepts.

On the other hand, Jacobi saw reason and rational theology in its critical versions as inherently as self-subverting. Since to know is to condition, to search for conditions for the unconditioned is inherently absurd and self-defeating.

[24] *SL* 816–17. [25] *SL* 111–12. [26] *SL* 113.
[27] *LHP* 3. 427. [28] *LHP* 3. 427. Cf. *FK* 64.

Moreover, if someone were ever to succeed somehow in pulling off this intrinsically absurd project, it would "succeed" only in turning God into a conditioned mundane object—which would be blasphemy. Hence Jacobi—extending Kant's account of cognition as culminating in antinomies—reached the same conclusion as Kant, that rational cognition of God is impossible. Jacobi opted instead for religion to take a leap of faith, to free faith entirely from thought and become immediate knowing. Hegel dismisses this project as practically impossible:

> Unaware of the small amount of thought that nonetheless must remain to it, it goes on to declare thought to be incapable of reaching truth and destructive of it. Thought supposedly is capable of comprehending one thing only, its incapacity to grasp the truth . . . and of proving to itself its own nothingness, with the result that suicide is its highest calling.[29]

Kant's and Jacobi's contributions to modern philosophy are "nothing but the culture of reflection raised to a system."[30] This amounts

> to nothing but the absolute restriction of reason to the form of finitude, an injunction never to forget the absoluteness of the [finite] subject in every rational cognition; they make limitation into an eternal law. . . . In this situation *philosophy cannot aim at the cognition of God, but only at what is called the cognition of man*.[31]

The upshot of this is not only indifference toward and lack of philosophical interest in metaphysics, whether pre-critical or critical, but also incomprehension of theology. Such a milieu distorts and rejects Anselm's ontological proof: "Metaphysics has subjected the simple thoughts of Anselm to the formality of [syllogistic] argument and has thereby deprived them of their true meaning and content."[32]

In his lectures Hegel proceeds historically in his treatment of the classical proofs, including the ontological proof. Hegel does not treat the ontological proof as natural theology which abstracts from religion, but rather as the culmination of elevation of spirit to God.[33] If the basic sense of the proof is introduced by religion, it is philosophy that makes explicit its significance and implications. In the proof, "God" as "subjective representation" dissolves itself and comes to have "the meaning of the unity of the concept, i.e., it has the meaning both of the pure concept and of reality, and of the unity of the two."[34] That is, "God is not *a* concept, but *the* concept,"[35] that which is in and for itself. The proof thus furnishes "the absolute form which is within itself a

[29] *LProofs*, 42. [30] *FK* 64. [31] *FK* 64–5; emphasis added. [32] *LPR* 3. 71.
[33] See *EL* §193, where Hegel notes that, while the proof is always attacked, it survives and keeps coming back, since its basic determinations are implicit in every mind and so it finds its way back in every philosophy even against its will (as in the case of immediate knowing).
[34] *LPR* 3. 174. [35] *LPR* 3. 71.

totality and contains the pure idea of truth itself. This absolute form has in its own self its content or reality."[36] The concept is not a trivial or empty identity in the traditional and Kantian sense: "this form is of quite another nature than logical form is ordinarily taken to be. It is already on its own account truth, since this content is adequate to its form, or the reality to its concept."[37] To be sure, the traditional proof is not yet in the logical form it assumes in Hegel's logic. But all that this means is that the traditional proof, like the metaphysical terms in which it was conceived and treated, is formally defective. In his historical treatment of it, Hegel points out the defects and responds to criticisms.

Hegel begins his analysis of the historical proof by noting that the term "God" is initially treated as a representation (*Vorstellung*)—that is, as if it were essentially subjective and finite. The question Anselm raises in the first version of the *Proslogion* proof is whether God exists only in the mind or both in the mind and in reality. The finitude of representation means that "God" is simply subjective, existent only in the mind. Representation is inherently one-sided; it constitutes the meaning of "God" as belonging to one side of an opposition—to wit, "God" is merely subjective, existing in the mind only. According to Hegel the ontological proof begins from the concept of God and seeks to demonstrate not the finite being and/or existence of God, but rather the actuality and objectivity of God.

> When we begin from God, the *starting point or God is posited in finite form*, of course, because it is not yet posited as identical with being and represented as having being [absolutely]; for a God who is not is something finite, and not genuinely God. The finitude of this relation is that it is subjective: *God [is here defined] not as subject but as something subjective*. God, this universal in general, does indeed have existence [*Existenz*], but, in terms of our representation, only this finite existence. *This is one-sided. We have God or this content as afflicted with the one-sidedness and finitude* that is called *representation* of God. It is our interest that representation should strip away *this blemish of being merely something represented and subjective, and that the definition for this content should become that of being*.[38]

How is the determination of being to be mediated with/to God? Being and God are distinct.

This distinction between concept and being reflects the philosophical–cultural development presupposed and radicalized further by Anselm's proof. Hegel observes that the relation of concept to being is the special concern of our time. The distinction between concept and being has been deepened and radicalized in modernity, in comparison to ancient philosophy. In modern metaphysics the antitheses are developed into contradictions more

[36] *SL* 592. [37] *SL* 593. [38] *LPR* 1. 433; emphasis added.

profoundly than in the ancients, who grasped themselves as part of nature, and not as transcending nature. For Hegel modernity occupies a higher historical–cultural standpoint than the ancients:

> it is precisely through the raising of our consciousness to the consciousness of infinite spirit—*a raising which began in religion*—that our general standpoint is a higher one. It is through this standpoint that the absolute spirit has confronted the spirit which used to be understood as the human spirit, and through this comparison the latter has been reduced to a finitude, i.e., to a limited natural spirit. On the other hand, it is through that very relation which comes into effect with that comparison, that *the human being has gained a wholly free foundation in himself, and established for himself a different relation to nature, namely, a relation of independence*.[39]

The former Greek spirit that understood itself as part of and acting in accordance with nature has been reduced to a limited, mortal finitude, on the one hand, that, on the other, is conscious of its freedom as transcending nature—that is, as subjective self-determining spirit.

According to Hegel's historical–cultural hermeneutics, Anselm's argument presupposes that, with the distinction between subjective and objective, human spirit has attained its highest level; this is presupposed and exhibited by the consciousness of freedom. Anselm posits the distinction between the subjective and the objective, and seeks to mediate it, stripping away the distortion of representation by showing the identity of the concept of God with objective being. Anselm holds that the distinction between concept and being, which is valid for finite beings, is not absolute or final, but rather is capable of mediation. What mediates the identity of concept and being for Anselm is the concept of perfection. Hegel summarizes Anselm's point thus:

> God is supposed to be that which is the most perfect; if God were merely a representation, he would not be the most perfect, for we regard as perfect that which is not merely a representation but to which being pertains also. This is quite correct.[40]

However, Hegel notes that not only is Anselm's concept of perfection indeterminate; it is also presupposed. Hegel states the presupposition thus: "Perfection is this unity of concept and being."[41] In Hegel's view, Anselm presupposes this view of perfection rather than demonstrates it. This presupposition becomes the point at issue in the critical discussion of the proof.

Gaunilo and Kant attack the ontological proof by clarifying and radicalizing the distinction between concept and being. The distinction becomes mutual exclusion, dualism: being is other than the concept, and both are finite. Since

[39] Hegel, "Fragment on the Philosophy of Spirit 1822/5," in *Philosophy of Subjective Spirit*, ed. and trans. M. J. Petry (3 vols; Dordrecht and Boston: D. Reidel, 1978–9), 1. 93; emphasis added.
[40] *LPR* 3. 70. [41] *LPR* 3. 70.

for Kant the concept is taken to be an empty form—that is, "only a concept"—Kant believes "we cannot 'pluck' being from the concept."[42] Similarly, Gaunilo's perfect or lost Island counterexample shows that thinking something perfect does not make it exist. "The fact that we can form a representation of this kind does not mean that these concepts are so."[43] "We know quite well that . . . that one can build castles in the air, but that this does not bring them into existence."[44] Hegel observes that Kant's counterexamples have a popular appeal, which is why, in the general judgment, Kant "produced a refutation of the ontological argument."[45] It is easy to agree with Kant that thought is merely abstract and subjective. But, if thought and being are absolutely exclusive, absolutely opposed, this excludes mediation and cognition. The result is the non-identity of concept and being, and skepticism, not merely about rationalist metaphysics but cognition itself.

Can this gulf between being and concept, concept and being, be mediated by Anselm's concept of perfection? Hegel reads Anselm's *Proslogion* proof as follows: "If God is merely a representation [*Vorstellung*], merely a thought or a concept, God is not what is most perfect, for we regard as perfect only that which is not merely represented but also has being . . . what is only represented is only imperfect . . . "[46] If God is merely a representation, then God must be finite, something merely subjective in opposition/contrast to what is objective. As merely subjective, the representation "God" is not what is most perfect and cannot be God. "For that which is perfect is something that is not merely represented but also is, *actually* is. Therefore, *because God is that which is perfect, God is not only or merely a representation, for actuality and reality belong to God as well.*"[47] Perfection implies not merely objectivity and independent existence, but also actuality, reality.

Hegel agrees that Anselm presupposes this doctrine of perfection. To be sure, the content of the presupposition, though indeterminate, is not false—Hegel acknowledges that this presupposition is one on which all philosophy depends:

> This presupposition . . . is present in, lies at the basis of our representation—[that of] all of us, of all philosophers. If it is permitted to make presuppositions, then surely this one can be made. Every human mind contains it *in actu*, not like the laughable logical proposition, A = A, what is, is. (This last they cannot deny, but in good company, i.e., within the guild, it may be smiled at.)[48]

The problem is rather that it *is* a *presupposition*. Philosophy as *Wissenschaft* is not supposed to have or depend on unjustified presuppositions or immediate assumptions. That is why for Hegel philosophy is possible only as system.

[42] *LPR* 3. 178. [43] *LPR* 3. 179. [44] *LPR* 3. 179.
[45] *LPR* 3. 179. [46] *LPR* 3. 179.
[47] *LPR* 1. 434 (1827) Cf. *LPR* 3. 70 (1821); 3. 179 (1824). [48] *LPR* 3. 70.

From this perspective, Anselm's proof, like much of what is usually called "philosophy," is pre-critical and dogmatic because it depends on presuppositions that it does not justify.[49]

Hegel adds that, "since God is posited as what is most perfect, he has no further definition in the argument. He is . . . only what is perfect, and what is perfect is the unity of concept and reality. . . . This unity is the definition of perfection and God himself at the same time."[50] If so, then the proof begs the question: its conclusion is identical with its premiss. The proof collapses into immediate knowledge (Jacobi). "This is why the proof cannot afford satisfaction for reason, since the presupposition is precisely what is at issue."[51]

A second line of attack on Anselm's proof, especially in its later quasi-Cartesian versions, asserts that it depends on the presupposition that being or existence is a real predicate that adds something to the concept and thus is part of the definition of the concept.[52] Kant objects that being is not a reality or real predicate; it is rather a logical predicate. Kant charges that the proof trades on the identification and confusion of the two. For example:

> In the subsequent and more extensive elaboration of Anselm's thought by understanding, it was said that the concept of God is that God is the quintessence of all reality, the most real essence. Now being is also a reality; so being also belongs to God. *The objection to this is that being is no reality*, is not part of the reality, of a concept. *The reality of the concept means the concept's determinateness of content; through being, however, nothing is added to the content of the concept.*[53]

Kant denies that being is a real predicate, and his example of the 100 dollars is intended to illustrate his point. Hegel characterizes Kant's objection as plausible, and reformulates it as follows:

> Hence Kant constructed this plausible case. I represent to myself a hundred dollars. The concept or the determinateness of content is the same whether I represent the determinateness to myself or have the money in my pocket. Using the hundred-dollar example we can also restate plausibly the objection to the first Anselmian form of the argument, according to which being is supposed to follow from the concept in general, namely the objection that concept and being are distinct from one another, that each is on its own account, and that being must be introduced from without or from elsewhere *because it does not lie within the concept*. The concept of a hundred dollars has no bearing whatever on the existence of the money.[54]

[49] *LPR* 2. 434–6; *LPR* 3. 179 (1824). Hegel extends this charge to Kant—to wit, the presupposition that cognition is an instrument to be cognized prior to its actual use—which is impossible, like the resolve of St Scholasticus, who resolved never to enter the water until he had learned to swim. *PhS* §71.

[50] *LPR* 3. 182. [51] *LPR* 3. 182. [52] *LPR* 1. 435.

[53] *LPR* 1. 435. [54] *LPR* 1. 435–6.

Again, "Whether I imagine a hundred dollars or actually possess them makes no difference [to the concept]; the content is the same whether I possess them or imagine them,"[55] for "a hundred imagined dollars have the same content as a hundred actual dollars, but the fact that I imagine them, think them, does not mean that I have them."[56]

Hegel believes that this obvious distinction between the real and the imaginary is the main factor in the popular acceptance of Kant's critique of the argument:

> This criticism, through its popular example, has made itself universally plausible: who does not know that a hundred actual dollars are different from a hundred merely possible ones? That they make a difference to the state of my fortune? Because this difference is so obvious with the hundred dollars, therefore the concept . . . as an empty possibility, and being, are different from each other. Therefore, the concept of God too is different from his being, and just as little as I can extract from the possibility of the hundred dollars their actuality, just as little can I extract from the concept of God his existence; but the ontological proof is supposed to consist of this extraction of the existence of God from his concept. Now though it is of course true that the concept is different from being, there is a still greater difference between God and the hundred dollars and other finite things. It is the *definition of finite things* that in them the concept is different from being, that concept and reality, soul and body are separable and hence they are perishable and mortal. The abstract definition of God, on the other hand, is precisely that God's concept and God's being are *unseparated* and *inseparable*. The genuine criticism of the categories and of reason is just this, to make the intellect aware of this difference and to prevent it from applying to God the determinations and relationships of the finite.[57]

In Hegel's view, Kant exploited a common-sense view of concepts to spare himself the effort of demonstrating the difference between concept and being: "Kant does not demonstrate the difference between concept and being; it is merely accepted in popular fashion."[58] Hegel concedes that "a determinacy of the understanding that is 'within my head' can of course lack being. [However,] [t]his sort of thing [e.g., the one hundred dollars] is not to be called a concept."[59] Kant's success in attacking the proof depends on confusing the subjective *representation* of God—that is, something finite constituted by the separability of concept and reality, and thus as inherently perishable—with the *concept* (of God); the crucial difference is that the latter is constituted by the *inseparability* of concept and reality. Given this inseparability, the finite concept is "only" a concept. However, "God is not *a* concept but *the* concept,"[60] namely: "the concept that is in itself the unity of concept and reality, the totality and likewise the reality."[61]

[55] *LPR* 3. 179. [56] *LPR* 3. 360. [57] *SL* 89. See p. 117, n. 101.
[58] *LPR* 3. 180. [59] *LPR* 1. 436. [60] *LPR* 3. 71. [61] *LPR* 3. 66.

To be sure, Gaunilo and Kant after him, claim that concept and being are different:

> Quite so: thus separated they are finite, untrue, and it is precisely the concern of reason and human common sense not to remain with the finite and untrue, not to take them as something absolute . . . *The concept without any objectivity is an empty representation or opinion; being without the concept is mere evanescent externality and appearance.*[62]

Hegel agrees with Kant and Gaunilo that concept and being *are* different and that their identity cannot be merely a question-begging presupposition. This presupposition must be justified, demonstrated as well. Further, Hegel accepts the distinction between a logical predicate and a real predicate.[63] This is why he complains that too much fuss is made about the term being, since it is simply the abstract relation of any term, including a logical predicate, with itself. Any concept, including God, must possess even this lowly logical predicate, which is a condition of logical discourse.[64] But, apart from historical discussions of the ontological proof, it is clear that Hegel prefers the categories of actuality (*Wirklichkeit*), necessity, and objectivity to abstract being, as, for example, when he says of the idea that "it is not so impotent that it merely ought to be, and thus fails to be actual."[65]

Consequently, Hegel draws the line between himself and Kant thus: that, if the categorical difference between concept and objectivity/being is taken as absolute, then they are separated, and in such abstract separation they are one-sided and untrue.[66] Then not only the concept of God but also thought and its concepts in general become mere ideas devoid of reality—that is, "mere" fictions, or "only" ideas that we make for ourselves. But then the "only reality"—that is, the only known identity of concept and reality—is finite individual human subjectivity (which is haunted by solipsism and nihilism). By these standards "conceiving is conceiving and nothing more."[67] Moreover, in secular modernity the conclusion is drawn that we

[62] *LPR* 3. 70; emphasis added.

[63] See *LPR* 3. 178–9; *LPR* 1. 435–6. Rosen emphasizes that Hegel agrees with Kant that being is not a real predicate, but only a logical predicate (*HSL* 105–7, 327–8; *KL* 2153, 6557).

[64] *SL* 828; cf. *EL* §51R: "God has to be expressly that which can only be 'thought as existing,' where the concept includes being within itself. It is this unity of concept and being that constitutes the concept of God. It is true that this is still a formal determination of God, and one which, for that reason, in fact contains only *the nature of the concept itself*. But it is easy to see that, even if it is taken in its totally abstract sense, the concept includes being in itself. For, however the concept may be further determined, it is itself minimally the immediate relation to itself that emerges through the sublation of its mediation . . . We might well say that it would be very odd if spirit's innermost core, the concept, or even if I, or above all the concrete totality that God is, were not rich enough to contain within itself even so poor a determination as being is—for being is the poorest and the most abstract one of all."

[65] *EL* §6R. [66] *SL* 592–3. [67] *LPR* 3. 183.

must hold on to this finite "only."[68] Hegel disagrees: "On the contrary, we must give up this 'only'."[69]

The philosophical task is to show that concept and being are both identical, without dogmatically affirming an immediate identity that presupposes the very point at issue, and yet different from each other, but without lapsing into or holding fast to absolute difference, a dualism and spurious finite–infinity that not only makes the actuality of God impossible, but also undermines cognition itself. Hegel formulates the task thus:

> The unity of the two determinations has to be demonstrated in such a way that it results from the negation of the antithesis, and it is shown that being is contained in the concept. . . . So the first step is that the determination of being is exhibited as affirmatively contained in the concept . . . But in the second place, they are also *different* from each other; thus their unity is the negative unity of the two, and the task now is to sublate the difference. The *difference* must be spoken of also, and what has to be done is to establish and demonstrate the unity *after* this differentiation. This demonstration is the task of the *Logic*. *That the concept is the movement by which it determines itself to be, that it is this dialectical movement of self-determination into being, or into its own opposite—this logical dimension is a further dimension which we do not find in the ontological proof—and this is where it is defective*.[70]

The italicized comments articulate Hegel's logical reconstruction of the ontological proof from the concept. To be sure, the entire *Logic* is Hegel's defense of the ontological proof.[71] In Hegel's revision of it, the proof means that the concept, as dialectical, sublates its own one-sidedness:

> That the concept sublates its own one-sidedness, that it determines itself implicitly, objectifies itself, realizes itself, this is a further insight which needs first have emerged from the nature of the concept. This insight which is not present—and

[68] *LPR* 3. 69. Hegel's explication of these points is developed more fully in the 1824 Lectures, where Hegel summarizes Kant's attack on the ontological proof as resulting in the sundering of the finite–infinite relation. What is left behind is an absolute separation between concept and existence in which the infinite is an unknowable *Jenseits*, and the sole reality in which concept and being can be known as united is human subjectivity (*LPR* 3. 68–70; 182–3). The problem for Hegel is to take the turn to the subject on which modernity insists without landing in atomism, subjectivism, and nihilism. Hegel criticizes Kant's dualisms—for example, his notorious distinction between *phenomena* and *noumena*; this distinction implies cognitive and cultural alienation. At the same time, Kant affirms human freedom and finds its *ratio cognoscendi* in the moral law; conversely, the *ratio essendi* of the moral law is freedom. Hegel interprets this as a spiritual dualism (between ought and is) that also implies alienation and has nihilistic implications. For Hegel, modernity has a dark side—to wit, metaphysical atomism and alienation that hold fast to finitude while yearning for a lost infinite. To hold fast to finitude is to hold fast to subjectivity that is merely an empty form certain only of itself (*LPR* 3. 166–8). Hegel is counseling modernity to let go of its own atomistic nullity (give up this "only") and embrace affirmative reconciliation with its other, the true infinite that he analyzes further in the *Logic* (*SL* 130–50) and *LPR* 1. 288–320.

[69] *LPR* 3. 69. [70] *LPR* 3. 180–1; emphasis added. [71] See *EL* §§193, 213–15.

could not occur—in Anselm or even in later times, is an insight into the extent to which the concept itself sublates its one-sidedness.[72]

3. HEGEL'S DOCTRINE OF THE CONCEPT

If a concept means simply Kant's imaginary 100 dollars, or Kant's abstract formal concepts that are empty without corresponding intuitions, then the attempt to "pluck" being or existence out of such a concept makes no sense.[73] Hegel attributes the widespread view that Kant successfully refuted the ontological proof to Kant's popular example of what a concept is—namely, 100 dollars. For "who does not know that a hundred actual dollars are different from a hundred merely possible ones?"[74] Hence, just as little as I can extract 100 actual dollars from 100 merely possible ones, so also the concept of God is simply an empty possibility from which it is impossible to extract God's existence. However, Hegel flatly denies that Kant's figurate "concept" of the 100 possible dollars is a genuine concept, for it is only something mental, "a content-determination of my consciousness," something within one's head that can, of course, lack being. "But this sort of thing is not to be called a concept."[75] What then is a concept?

For Hegel this is by no means a simple question or issue, for his doctrine of the concept takes up the entire third book of the *Science of Logic*: "The Logic of the Concept," which defies easy summary because of its sheer richness and complexity. It includes such topics as the mediation of Spinoza and Kant, the doctrines of judgment (the *diaresis* or differentiation of the concept) and syllogism, which is the fulfillment of the concept (as the unity in difference of subject and predicate). But there is more: the concept is a totality that develops itself; in this development the "subjective concept" makes the transition to objectivity—this transition is equivalent to the transition from concept to being in the ontological proof. But there is more: objectivity transforms itself from mechanism and chemism into organism and teleology, and further to the idea of life, cognition, and the absolute idea, which is defined as the unity in difference of concept and objectivity. It is clear that the concept is not simply *a* concept, something inert taken in abstraction and isolation; and it is not a duality, but rather an articulated *totality* constituted by reciprocal relations, a unity in and through difference. Each of the moments of the

[72] *LPR* 3. 182.

[73] "This involves the recognition that the concept is not merely a form which is without any content of its own; for on the one hand, nothing could be deduced from such a form, and, on the other, tracing a given content back to the empty form of a concept would only rob the content of its determinacy, instead of securing the cognition of it" (*EL* §160Z).

[74] *SL* 89. [75] *LPR* 1. 436.

concept is the whole and is posited in inseparable unity with the whole.[76] The moments of the concept are universality, particularity (*Besonderheit*), and singularity (*Einzelheit*), which is the actuality and concrete universality of the concept. These moments, taken abstractly, correspond to identity, difference, and ground.[77] It is important to resist the temptation to count these moments, because mathematics separates as it counts. However, they are not three concepts but a determinate, articulated whole or totality. Counting its moments introduces separation and fragmentation into the concept. But the moments of the concept cannot be separated, for, since in the concept their identity is posited, each of its moments can be grasped only on the basis of and together with the others.[78] Its development thus includes transition to singularity, actuality.

In his lecture Hegel tells his students that

> the concept in our sense is not what is ordinarily meant by "concept," i.e., something opposed to objective reality, something that is *not supposed* to have being in it. [The concept in Hegel's sense] negates its character of being subjective; this character is negated, or rather the concept itself is this dialectic [of negation and negation of negation]. This condition or turn constitutes the true transition [of concept to being].[79]

To be sure, "the concept as subjectivity is differentiated from being, and our concern is precisely the superseding of this distinction, or the removal of subjectivity from the concept."[80] As Hegel reconstructs the ontological proof from the concept, the so-called transition from concept to being has nothing to do with "plucking" existence out of an empty, merely formal concept. Nor does it have anything to do with adding a predicate to a fixed subject. Rather, the task is to remove from the subjective concept the defect of being merely subjective. The transition from concept to existence is dialectical—that is, it

[76] *EL* §160. [77] *EL* §164.

[78] *EL* §164. Stanley Rosen has a divergent view, possibly because he fails to appreciate the crucial significance of singularity (*Einzelheit*—which he, like A. V. Miller, mistranslates as "individuality"). Rosen blurs the distinction between *Einzelheit* and *Besonderheit*, and this confusion leads him to declare that the central moment of the concept is particularity (*Besonderheit*) (*HSL* 417; *KL* 8290). This underplays the significance of singularity in Hegel's dialectical holism. Singularity is the concrete universal that is the ground from which abstract universality and particularity are abstractions and on which they depend. Although Hegel asserts that "every moment of the concept is itself the whole concept . . . " (*EL* §160), he adds that "singularity, the subject, is the concept *posited* as totality" (*EL* §163). Singularity is not only concrete universal; it is also the locus of logical personhood. See translator's introduction, *EL*, pp. xix–xx.

[79] *LPR* 3. 71. Elsewhere Hegel puts his point this way: "What has usually been called a concept has to be distinguished from the Concept in the speculative sense. The assertion, repeated many thousands of times until it became a prejudice, that the infinite cannot be grasped through concepts, is made only in the customary or one-sided sense. . . . Speculative Logic contains [and corrects] the older logic and metaphysics . . . " (*EL* §9).

[80] *LPR* 3. 71. Again the point is that the suspension of the distinction between subject/concept and being, means that the concept can only be thought as existing.

has to proceed out of a clear recognition of their non-identity. Since existence is other than the concept, "what the proof requires is that what is purely and simply other, the contrary of the concept, should proceed from the concept."[81] Hegel agrees with Gaunilo and Kant that existence is other than concept. But it is not absolutely other, for such an empiricist view is nothing more than "a silly, inane idealism that imagines that if anything is thought it ceases to be, or even that what is cannot be thought . . . "[82]

In Hegel's view, the concept itself, through its own negativity, removes from itself the defect of being merely subjective. As alive and self-determining, it objectifies itself in its opposite while yet remaining itself; that is, the concept as self-determining is also self-realizing/actualizing. Hegel's concept is a "logical organism" that negates or divides itself in judgment, and negates its negation and coalesces with itself in its objectivity—that is, syllogism.

Hegel understands the entire *Logic* as an extended ontological proof, but this is not identical with the historical forms of the ontological proof that he discusses and criticizes in his lectures. The explicit ontological proof in the logic consists in the transition from subjective concept to objectivity mediated by disjunctive syllogism (discussed in Section 4). As we shall see, in this transition objectivity ceases to be opposed to the concept and is its objectification and realization. However, neither the logical development nor the logic as extended ontological proof stops with the transition to objectivity; important as this is, it remains a temporary rest-stop on the transition from substance to concept and subjectivity. The logic as extended ontological proof proceeds categorically through the sublation of sheer power and objectivity in chemism and teleology. Teleology as inner purposiveness (entelechy) is the final cause that maintains itself in its operation. Teleology is sublated in the category of life, and life sublated in cognition, in practice, and finally in the absolute idea, which is the unity in difference of concept and objectivity.[83] This categorical development means that, while it is true that every beginning must be made with the absolute, the absolute is at first only *in itself*, and thus not the absolute or the posited concept. Thus the dialectical development is not superfluous because "the advance consists in the universal determining itself and being *for itself* the universal, that is, equally an individual and a subject. Only in its consummation is it the absolute."[84]

It should be evident neither Hegel's concept nor his logic is a concept or logic in the traditional sense; rather they include the dialectical sublation of the

[81] *LPR* 3. 177. Hegel discusses both Anselm, and the Cartesian form of the argument. Both seek to establish the unity of God's concept and God's existence. Thus the Cartesian form of the argument runs: God is the conceptual sum of all forms of reality; consequently, he also includes being. This is entirely correct (*LPR* 3. 180). For Hegel's discussion of Anselm's concept, "that than which nothing greater can be conceived," cf. *EL* §193R.

[82] *LProofs*, 165. On the empiricist origin of this "silly idealism," cf. *EL* §§47, 39.

[83] *EL* §§ 192–3; 213–14. [84] *SL* 829.

separation of concept and being. "This involves the recognition that the concept is not merely a form which is without any content of its own; for, on the one hand, nothing could be deduced from such a form, and, on the other, tracing a given content back to the empty form of the concept would only rob the content of its determinacy, instead of securing the cognition of it."[85] For this reason, Hegel is critical of the syllogism of traditional logic and the understanding, calling it "devoid of rationality,"[86] because its terms, as formal, flatten and suppress differences of content. Moreover, the terms of formal logic have no place for living things that contradict themselves and sublate their contradictions. Yet to deny the reality of such contradiction is to demand that nothing living shall exist. Syllogism expresses the consummation of the concept as a supersensuous, articulated totality:

> If reason is supposed to be the cognition that knows about God, freedom, right and duty, the infinite, unconditioned, supersensuous . . . the question still remains, what is it in all these objects that makes them rational? It is this, that the infinitude of the objects is not the empty abstraction from the finite, not the universality that lacks content and determinateness, but the universality that is fulfilled or realized, the concept that is determinate and possesses its determinateness in the true way, namely, that *it differentiates itself within itself and is the unity of these fixed and determinate differences*.[87]

In other words, Hegel's concept is an organic totality that, properly understood, combines logic and metaphysics.[88]

Logic is the consciousness of syllogism as the absolute triadic form of cognition—that is, as organic totality.[89] Philosophy is the study of articulated totalities. "The whole of philosophy is nothing else but a systematic study of the definition of unity; and likewise the philosophy of religion is just a succession of unities, where unity always abides, but is continuously becoming more determinate."[90] In becoming more determinate, the syllogism passes from a subjectivity that is *opposed* to objectivity to an objectivity that is the *realization* of subjectivity.[91] In this way it attains its totality, and thus its truth.

4. THE TRANSITION FROM CONCEPT TO OBJECTIVITY

Hegel's doctrine of the concept includes subjective concept, and the subjective concept includes the topics of judgment and syllogism. The ontological proof is

[85] *EL* § 60Z. [86] *EL* §181R. On Hegel's concept of syllogism, cf. *ILH* and *FTDL*.
[87] *SL* 665; emphasis added. Cf. *EL* §181R. [88] *LProofs*, 78–80, 99, 104.
[89] *SL* 592–3. [90] *LPR* 1. 379–80. [91] *SL* 666.

the conclusion of disjunctive syllogism. Hegel treats judgment (*Urteil*/*diaresis*) as the differentiation of the concept into oppositions/antinomies. Dialectical syllogism resolves the antinomy of judgment, transforming and sublating the concept's differentiation, reintegrating it and rendering it concrete (*concrescere*) and determinate on a higher level of concrescence. The syllogism is a dialectical synthesis of opposites as an articulated totality exhibiting both identity and difference. Syllogism is not an empty form, but a unity in and through difference of thought and being. Thus it possesses ontological–real import. In the mutual mediation of the terms of the syllogism, the syllogism passes from "subjective" subjectivity to its realization, or objectivity—the ontological proof. The differences among the terms of the syllogism are related in a genuinely rational way only insofar as *their distinction is at the same time the negation of their (absolute) difference*.[92] The concept is an organized totality in the sense that in each of its moments all the others are present; *Einzelheit*—singularity—is the positing of the concept as a whole.

In Hegel's analysis the disjunctive syllogism is the highest level of development of the syllogism of necessity;[93] in it the universal term "A" is exhaustively specified into its species, and the species are both identical in the universal and different (as species) from each other. Thus,

A is either B or C or D.
But A is B.
Therefore A is neither C nor D.

Or again:

A is either B or C or D.
But A is neither C nor D.
Therefore A is B.[94]

According to Giacomo Rinaldi, the members in which disjunctive syllogism is articulated are integrally related. In the major premiss, the universal (A), as the middle term, or substantial identity of the genus, is differentiated into the totality of its specific differences, of which A, the universal, constitutes the substantial principle. The minor premiss explicitly posits the genus as disjoined into its species; this is a relation of opposition between members of the major premiss, which is already implicit in the major premiss as disjunctive. Such a relation of opposition is for Hegel the strictest form of necessary connection.

[92] *HILH* 239–46. As we shall see, Errol Harris insists on this subtle but crucial point.
[93] *HILH* 244. [94] *SL* 701–2.

The disjunctive syllogism is a synthesis of categorical syllogism and hypothetical syllogism. It constitutes the truth of the whole sphere of syllogistic relations.[95] According to Hegel:

> In the consummation of the syllogism . . . where objective universality is no less posited as the totality of the form determinations, the distinction of mediating and mediated has disappeared. That which is mediated is itself an essential moment of what mediates it, and each moment appears as the totality of what is mediated.[96]

That is, "the form of syllogism which consisted in the difference of the middle term from its extremes has thereby sublated itself. Thus the concept as such has been realized; more exactly, it has obtained a reality that is *objectivity*."[97] In the disjunctive syllogism, the subjective concept ceases to be merely subjective; it negates its merely subjective character and objectifies itself, and in its self-objectification becomes actually identical with objectivity.[98] The identity of thought and being, of subject and object, of concept and being, which in the sphere of subjective concept was still one-sidedly expressed in the form of mere subjectivity, must now be posited also in the opposite form of objectivity. This is the completion of the syllogism, the fully determinate concept:

> Its movement is the sublating of this mediation, in which nothing is in and for itself, but each term is only by means of an other. The result is an *immediacy* which has issued from the *sublating of the mediation*, a being which is no less identical with the mediation, and which is the concept that has restored itself out of, and in, its otherness. This being is therefore a *fact* [*Sache*] that is *in and for itself—objectivity*.[99]

The syllogism in Hegel's sense is not the syllogism of traditional formal logic. Rather Hegel's speculative syllogism is dialectical; it proceeds by negating, preserving, and transforming its terms—that is, they become ideal, fluid moments of a higher determinate unity and totality: "In this ideality of the moments, syllogistic reasoning acquires the determination of essentially containing the negation of the terms through which it proceeds—and hence that of being a mediation through the sublation of mediation, and a concluding of the subject not with an other, but with a *sublated* other, [that is,] with itself."[100] Thus recast as a development into totality that both negates and preserves its lower stages of ground (essence) and existence, the concept as syllogism culminates in a self-determining totality, a unity in and through difference. As self-realizing, the concept as totality stands on its own; it is the true beginning. Hegel writes: the concept "determines itself into objectivity. It is self-evident that this latter transition is identical in character with what formerly appeared in metaphysics as the inference from the concept, namely

[95] *HILH* 245. [96] *SL* 703. [97] *SL* 703. [98] *HILH* 246. [99] *SL* 704.
[100] *EL* §192R. The syllogism is a unity in and through difference, not a relapse into abstract identity.

the concept of God, to his existence, or as the so-called ontological proof of the existence of God."[101] Now for some clarifications.

In Hegel's view, Kant's *First Critique* is limited by its orientation toward judgment in its table of categories. Judgment divides the universal. This division has negative implications—to wit, the subject is other than the object (or predicates). For Hegel, syllogism is a necessary corrective to and complement of the judgment, which is the universal in diremption or division; syllogism unites what judgment divides and separates. Judgment differentiates via its "either/or." To be sure, differentiation is indispensable to discursive cognition. The understanding insists on difference, exclusion, and disjunction, and Hegel agrees that it is right to do so. This differentiation holds true for the ontological proof; the unity of concept and being is not immediate. Hegel agrees with Gaunilo and Kant that concept and being are different.

However, Errol Harris points out that the disjunction of the understanding in formal and transcendental logic is exclusive and absolute. This is a problem, because it implies the sheer exclusion and non-identity of the terms of the

[101] *SL* 705. Hegel claims that the ontological proof is simply an application of the logic of the self-developing, self-mediating *concept* to theology as a particular content. Hegel declares that the *content* makes no difference because it is the *concept* itself that is the unity-in-difference of thought and being. The ontological proof appears to be an "ontic" application of this logical principle. But Hegel also makes clear in the *Logic* that the concept under examination is the divine concept itself, i.e., the pure concept *is* the absolute divine concept itself, which must be taken not in a subordinate logical sense of contingent finite being, but only as equivalent to the absolute idea (*SL* 707). Hence the transition from concept to existence in this case is not simply an application of a logical principle to an ontic theological content. On the contrary, in *LPR* 3. 181 (1824), Hegel returns to the train of thought of his *Logic* (*SL* 702–8), and remarks again that it makes no difference what the *content* is that has to objectify and realize itself—but then he immediately adds that "it seems that this necessity can only hold good for God." In 1827, after denying that terms like Kant's 100 dollars are concepts, Hegel asserts that "We must take the concept as such, we must take the absolute concept in its consummate form, the concept in and for itself, the concept of God—and this concept contains being as a determinacy" (*LPR* 1. 436) He adds: "the inseparability of concept and being is only absolutely the case with God" (*LPR* 1. 440). In the 1821 lecture manuscript Hegel asserts that "God is not *a* concept but *the* concept; this is the absolute reality and ideality" (*LPR* 3. 71) The issue is further discussed in the 1830 *Encyclopedia Logic*. While all concepts are self-objectifying/realizing, only God is *necessarily* so: "But God has to be explicitly that which can only be '*thought as existing*'... It is this [necessary] unity of concept and being that constitutes the concept of God" (*EL* §51R). In other words, the ontological proof is irreducibly *modal* (cf. Charles Hartshorne, *The Logic of Perfection* (LaSalle, IL: Open Court, 1962), 49–50), turning on the distinction between necessity and contingency. Both here and in *SL* 89–90, 592–3, Hegel's position is consistent with Mendelssohn's point that the ontological proof does not turn on whether existence is a real predicate, as Kant claimed, but rather on the absolute logical (i.e., modal) difference between necessity and contingency. Existence cannot be separated from the idea of absolute necessity without destroying the idea itself. "I must think the thing itself [*Sache*] along with the concept, or simply let go of the concept. The whole matter rests on this important distinction and the distinction in no way rests on a merely arbitrary definition" (Moses Mendelssohn, *Morgensstunden*, cited in Kevin J. Harrelson, *The Ontological Argument from Descartes to Hegel* (New York: Humanity Books 2009), ch. 6.). See also Hegel's rejoinder to another misunderstanding of absolute necessity by Kant in Ch. 2, n. 112. *LProofs*, 78–81.

syllogism, and this undermines syllogism and syllogistic mediation. According to Harris, an important part of what is going on in disjunctive syllogism is the self-specification of A, the universal term. Disjunctive syllogism is an exhaustive delineation of the possibilities of A's specification into species. However, if every disjunct is taken to be absolutely exclusive and other than the rest—if difference is taken to be absolute without any qualification by identity—the specific differences themselves paradoxically disappear. Every disjunct becomes an abstract, exclusive identity. Each term is taken as an "atom" lacking relation and interdependence with others. Consequently, the understanding's view of the syllogism undermines it. Harris comments:

> There is a sense in which the specification of the universal into mutually exclusive species is also inclusive of them all, for all are comprehended in one system. Nevertheless, [in Hegel's disjunctive syllogism] "the 'either/or' expresses mutual otherness and the distinction essential to all articulated wholeness. It is the relation on which the understanding insists; *but to insist upon it to the exclusion of the unity and interdependence of the disjuncts, is to overlook the universal which is being specified in the judgment*."[102]

Hegel criticizes absolute disjunction and exclusion because these undermine syllogism and make syllogistic mediation impossible.[103] Having rejected the extreme view of absolute disjunction because it undermines the syllogism or the reason that thinks,[104] Hegel acknowledges that disjunction is necessary to express the mutual otherness and difference that are essential to articulated wholeness. However, the self-differentiating universal that ties such differences together is equally essential, because, if the syllogism is to work, the universal must be present in and connect all its disjuncts.[105] The middle term requires a determinate universal that makes the syllogism possible, makes it "go."

As the highest level of the syllogism of necessity, disjunctive syllogism completes Hegel's doctrine. In disjunctive syllogism the universal is fully self-specified, fully concrete. Full concreteness is equivalent to full actualization. The defect of one-sided subjectivity has been overcome and the subjective concept, expanded to totality, stands forth as an actual whole. In Hegel's reconstruction of the proof, the disjunctive syllogism removes the defect of being merely subjective from the universal—that is, the subjective concept. Objectivity ceases to be opposed to the subject and becomes instead the self-actualization of the subject.[106]

[102] *ILH* 235; emphasis added.

[103] If the syllogism consists in the unity of the extremes being posited in it, and if, all the same, this unity is simply taken, on the one hand, as a particular on its own, and, on the other hand, as a merely external relation, and non-unity is made the essential relationship of the syllogism, then the reason that constitutes the syllogism contributes nothing to rationality. *SL* 665.

[104] *SL* 664. [105] *ILH* 245.

[106] *ILH* 56. Harris notes that for Hegel objectivity has a double meaning—to wit, opposite to the subject/concept and the self-objectification and self-realization of the subject/concept. Objectivity is a category higher than any of those below the level of the concept. It is universal

> the concept as subjectivity is differentiated from being, and our concern is precisely the superseding of this distinction, or *the removal of [mere] subjectivity from the concept.*... The concept negates its character of being [merely] subjective... or rather, the concept itself is the dialectic of negation and being negated. This condition in turn constitutes the true transition.[107]

Hegel agrees with Kant that being is not a real predicate. But the point is not to add real predicates, but rather "to remove from [the concept] the shortcoming of being only subjective, of not being the idea. The concept that is only something subjective, separate from being, is a nullity."[108] However, the concept is no nullity; it is alive—that is, self-objectifying. This self-objectifying concept is Hegel's reformulation of the ontological proof:

> This subjectivity, with the determinations which have been cited here (the concept, the judgment and syllogism), is not to be regarded as an empty framework that can only be filled up from outside by objects present on their own account; on the contrary, it is subjectivity itself which, being dialectical, breaks through its own barrier and blossoms forth into objectivity by means of syllogism.[109]

The "subject" here is no longer a term in opposition to the object. Rather the subject is a self-objectifying concept, an inclusive totality, the true infinite, the subject–object.[110]

To be sure, the category of objectivity is not yet a full concept of the absolute, but only of the absolute as object that is blind necessity—a position that Hegel correlates with Spinoza's substance: "Substance is an essential stage in the... development of the idea, but it is not the idea itself... but only the idea in the still restricted form of necessity.... the universal might of negation—is only the dark shapeless abyss... in which all determinate content is swallowed up as radically null and void..."[111] Objectivity corresponds to a negative view of the absolute as fate that is also a feature of superstition and religions based on servile fear.[112] More needs to be said than that God is simply absolute object or blind necessity and fate, and Hegel does have more to say. This is what the doctrine of divine personhood and absolute spirit are about. In order to get there, objectivity must undergo further development and transformation in and through the categories of mechanism, chemism, and

and necessary, rather than a content presented by sense perception. Both subject and object are categories of thought and are grounded in the universal, as its self-articulation. Harris notes that the exact correlation between Hegelian Logic and Aristotelian Logic is difficult to trace because Hegel's is a term logic, rather than a propositional logic, and the relation between them does not seem to be tied to the position of the middle term in the premisses. The Hegelian syllogism is the dialectical triad, in which each term is both itself and others. *ILH* 241–2.

[107] *LPR* 3. 71 (1821). [108] *LProofs*, 190; cf. *LPR* 1. 436–7.
[109] *EL* §19Z. [110] *SL* 709.
[111] *EL* §151Z. For further discussion, cf. *SL* 536–40. [112] *EL* §193Z.

teleology, which culminates in the category of life and ultimately the absolute idea. But before we address those issues, we need to examine how Hegel connects the discussion of disjunctive syllogism in the *Logic* with other aspects of the proof, and his attempt to make plausible his view of the absolute's self-objectification and self-actualization in drive (*Trieb*) and action.

5. THE PROOF TRANSFORMED INTO THE SELF-MOVING CONCEPT

Hegel observes that, owing to Kant's attack, the rationalist metaphysics of God (natural theology) has been cast aside as a poor shoddy thing, unworthy of notice. However, in Hegel's view, "we are mistaken when we suppose that, because their form is attacked, the proofs of God's existence have become antiquated with respect to their content. But the content is, of course, not presented in its purity."[113] Besides, while Kant's attack on metaphysics discredited natural theology, his acceptance of the traditional metaphysical categories and his subjective interpretation of both those categories and the postulates of practical reason mean that Kant substituted a subjective dogmatism for the objective dogmatism of classical metaphysics.

For Kant, concepts without intuitions are empty. It is a short step from this to the popular view of concepts as "only concepts"—that is, as something subjective and merely mental–psychological. We may *think* that one can build castles in the air, "but this does not bring them into existence."[114] Kant's choice of the "concept" of 100 dollars to illustrate the distinction between the real and the merely possible is not a demonstration of a difference between concept and being; Kant accepts the distinction made in popular fashion.[115] Hegel believes that Kant's example of the "concept" of 100 dollars is as logically spurious as it is psychologically plausible and persuasive. Only the latter subjective "plausibility" and ignorance concerning the former spuriousness account, in Hegel's estimation, for Kant's widespread success in discrediting the ontological proof.[116] But, in Hegel's view, Kant utterly failed to do justice to what a concept is.

In his lectures he makes good on his claim that his doctrine of the concept is not what is ordinarily and popularly meant by the expression "only a concept." "On the contrary, we must give up this 'only'"[117] because it identifies concepts with human subjectivity in *opposition* to being, such that "conceiving is

[113] *LPR* 1. 420 n. 122. [114] *LPR* 3. 179. [115] *LPR* 3. 179–80.
[116] See *SL* 88–100. *LPR* 3. 179. In his lectures Hegel was less polemical and sarcastic in attributing "plausibility" to Kant's criticism. *LPR* 1. 435.
[117] *LPR* 3. 69.

conceiving and nothing more."[118] On the contrary, for Hegel conceiving is something more than content-free conceiving because the categories of the *Logic* are already on the ontological level; they are unities in difference of thought and being.[119]

Hegel strove in lecture to present his complex doctrine of the concept in simplified form for his students. He writes:

> A conceptual determination, indeed any concept, is not of itself something in *repose* but *something that moves itself*. It is essentially *activity*, and for that reason it is *mediation within itself*, just as thinking in general is a form of activity or inward self-mediation . . . Thus when we consider the definition of the concept, we have before us nothing but mediations; and the proofs of God are likewise nothing but mediations. Their aim is to present God by using a mediation.[120]

Hegel distinguishes two dimensions of mediation, a subjective and an objective:

> (1) The subjective mediation for our cognition, in order that a sure insight should develop for cognition: the aim is to prove it to *me*; here the mediation has only *a subjective interest*, namely that of my cognizing. However, it is clear that the mediation is not to be understood in this subjective way—*to conceive it thus is to misconceive it from the very outset*—but rather that the mediation is equally
>
> (2) an objective mediation of God [that is, the logical concept of God] within himself, an internal mediation of his own logic, the logic contained in the divine idea itself. It is only when it is understood in this way that mediation becomes a necessary determination, a necessary moment. In the proofs for God's existence, we must discard the [subjective] form(s) of the understanding. They must show themselves to be a necessary moment of the *concept* itself, a *going forth* of mediation, an *activity* on the part of the concept itself.[121]

What kind of activity? The activity of the concept is dialectical self-mediation that develops into self-realization. Hegel recasts the proof because the

[118] *LPR* 3. 183.

[119] See Stephen Houlgate, *The Opening of Hegel's Logic* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2006).

[120] *LPR* 2. 252; emphasis added. I agree with Stanley Rosen's criticism of Terry Pinkard's claim that for Hegel it is only our thought that moves and not the concepts themselves, i.e., that the movement of contradiction is merely subjective and not objective (*Hegel's Dialectic* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988), 14, cited by Rosen, *HSL* 489 n. 9). Pinkard 'rehabilitates' Hegel within the Kantian frame by turning him into a Neo-Kantian (see Ch 1, n. 17; see also n. 101 in this chapter). My reasons for agreeing with Rosen's interpretation are evident in the texts cited, in this note and n. 121, which clearly distinguish subjective and the objective mediations, and plainly assert that to conceive mediation only subjectively "is to misconceive it from the very outset," and also that "mediation is *equally* an *objective mediation . . . an activity on the part of the concept itself*" (*LPR* 2. 253). Hegel's point is that "it is only when it is understood in this way that mediation becomes a necessary determination, a necessary moment" (*LPR* 2. 253) Hegel's is a philosophy of organism; in contrast, Pinkard's view resembles Neo-Kantian subjective idealism.

[121] *LPR* 2. 252–3.

traditional forms of the proof distort its immanent, necessary logic. Anselm's proof mediates the transition from concept to being by appeal to a presupposed concept of perfection—that is, the unity of thought and being. However, since in Anselm's proof God as the greatest conceivable being has no other meaning than the perfect unity of thought and being, the proof begs the question. The presupposition is precisely what is at issue. The proof of this presupposition, which Hegel intends to furnish, must show that the concept is self-determining, self-objectifying, and self-realizing. But Anselm and other defenders (and critics) of the proof lacked this insight into the concept, an insight that Hegel claims to achieve in his *Logic*: the concept both produces and sublates its one-sidedness.

For Hegel, the task of the proof is to show that what is opposed to and contrary to the concept—namely, being/existence/actuality—proceeds from the concept. This seems to Gaunilo and Kant to be an impossibility, because they presuppose abstract identity and take the distinction between concept and being to be absolute. They further assume that the concept is something inert, an empty isolated atom. Therefore, it cannot close or bridge the gulf between concept and existence. For Hegel, the concept is a self-mediating movement, a totality that posits and resolves contradictions—in short, it is the dialectical movement of rationality itself.

Stanley Rosen claims that Hegel's critique of formalism in philosophy implies that for Hegel logic should not be the taskmaster, but the life of thinking.[122] Rosen writes:

> Hegel does not detach the forms of argument from the motions or processes of conceptual thinking. His primary concern is to describe these processes in language that itself exhibits the movements it describes. . . . The attempt to formalize these processes would immediately suppress the dialectical movement that is the mark of the life of the spirit and transform it into the skeleton of a corpse.[123]

Moreover, Hegel claims in the passage already cited that "we must discard the [subjective] form(s) of the understanding. They must show themselves to be a necessary moment of the *concept* itself, a *going forth* of mediation, an *activity* on the part of the concept itself."[124] Dialectical reason nullifies the abstract fixed and rigid oppositions and antinomies of the understanding, and it transforms these mechanistic categories into organic totalities and processes. Rosen comments on the relation of dialectical reason (*Vernunft*) to the understanding as follows:

> *Vernunft* is negative and dialectical because it dissolves the determinations of *Verstand* into nothing. That is, the attempt to think through the structure of the cosmos of traditional rationalism founders in contradiction, of which the most

[122] *HSL* 31; *KL* 630. [123] *HSL* 4–5; *KL* 115–24. [124] *LPR* 2. 252–3.

> important example for Hegel is that of the Kantian antinomies. [But] reason is [also] positive because it produces the universal and grasps the particular therein. It rescues the negated fragments of traditional rationalism and generates the universal process that is the condition for the possibility of thinking these fragments as moments in a coherent whole.[125]

The categories of Hegel's *Logic* coalesce in a progressive development toward concreteness and completeness. The whole is a teleological, organically interrelated totality that cannot be adequately captured by analysis into rigid and lifeless structures. The categories of the *Logic* are alive, self-organizing, and interrelated. They are not isolated, separate logical atoms, but, while irreducible, they are inseparably related.

Hegel's philosophical project in the *Logic* is a philosophical trinitarianism that is a philosophy of social organism and absolute idealism. The absolute idea in the *Logic* is a philosophical term, in contrast to theological representations and symbols. Nevertheless the absolute idea is a "god-term" that is at once a critique of traditional metaphysics and a sublation of traditional theology—namely, the abstract, impersonal monism of Spinoza and the dualism of traditional theism. The absolute idea is Hegel's philosophical trinitarianism or philosophy of organism, which exhibits and grounds the unity in difference of thought and being.

In his 1831 *Lecture on the Ontological Proof*, Hegel indicates that his concept of the concept is organism. Organism is an articulated totality that is unity in and through difference that cannot be reduced to abstract identity (because that collapses difference into identity or monism) or to abstract difference (because that would fragment and disintegrate the whole into abstract atoms); organic totality is thus an identity of identity and difference, or unity in and through difference. As Hegel says, the term identity is a misleading expression, for what is essentially involved is organic life within God.[126]

Hegel's employment of the organic model and movement of the concept is a critique of the metaphysics that "has subjected the simple thoughts of Anselm to the formality of argument," and, by formalizing and abstractly isolating and separating its terms, "has thereby deprived them of their true meaning and content."[127] Kant continues this process of formalization and abstraction. He sharpens the traditional metaphysical dualism between concept and existence, reason and sense, holding concept and being apart as abstract units or atoms that are utterly different. God is thinkable but not knowable. For Hegel, the

[125] *HSL* 33–4; *KL* 673–7.

[126] *Lecture on the Ontological Proof* (1831), in *LProofs*, 187. Elsewhere Hegel comments that representational modes of thinking find a denial of God more intelligible than a denial of the world. *EL* §50R.

[127] *LPR* 3. 71.

understanding is an important form of thinking, but one that does not advance beyond abstract identity and the law of non-contradiction. Moreover, it claims that it is impossible to go beyond this opposition and mutual exclusion.[128] Hegel observes that, even on the ordinary view, a concept devoid of being is a subjective nullity and untrue.[129]

While Hegel agrees with Kant that being is not a real predicate, he also rejects the traditional view of theological predication of both Kant and traditional metaphysics in which external predicates are attached to a fixed, inert, and otherwise empty subject. He breaks with those problems and reconstructs the proof on an organic model. On the latter model the problem is not in attaching an external predicate to a fixed subject, but rather in portraying the subjective concept's own self-movement and self-objectification, which "remove(s) from it the shortcoming of being only subjective, of not being actual, i.e., of not yet being the [absolute] idea."[130] Hegel claims that on this organic model the unity of concept and being is not a presupposition (as it was for the traditional proof) but rather a result of the concept's own self-objectification.

Hegel concedes that, on the organic model, abstract being is implicit in the concept, but only implicit. However, "when we begin from [the concept of] God, the starting point is posited in finite form, of course, because it is not yet posited as identical with being and represented as having being absolutely."[131] From this perspective, abstract being is an impoverished concept, a deficiency. Thus, short of its self-objectification, the concept remains one-sided, subjective, deficiently actual. But it is not inert:

> the concept does not only have being within itself implicitly—it is not merely we who have this insight, but that the concept is also being for itself (explicitly). That is, it sublates its subjective deficiency (i.e., the one-sidedness of being merely subjective) and objectifies itself. What the concept does is to sublate its differentiation. When we look closely at the concept, we see that its identity with being is no longer a presupposition but a result. The concept objectifies itself, makes itself reality and thus becomes the truth, the unity of subject and objectivity (*Objekt*).[132]

Hegel maintains that the concept is the movement by which it determines itself to be, that it is this dialectical movement of self-objectification (self-determination) into its opposite, or being.[133] The concept negates and divides itself, such that being is other than and opposed to the concept. But this differentiation of the concept—namely, the posited opposition between concept and being—is sublated, and this negation of negation is the self-realization of the concept—namely, its *actuality*.[134] This is the movement of

[128] *LProofs*, 192. [129] *LProofs*, 190. [130] *LProofs*, 190. [131] *LPR* 1. 433.
[132] *Lecture on the Ontologica Proof* (1831), in *LProofs*, 191. [133] *LPR* 3. 181.
[134] Hegel distinguishes between abstract being as simple self-reference, A = A, "whatever is, is," and actuality. What the ontological proof establishes is not that God is abstract being or identity, but rather the *actuality* that results from the negation of the negation of concept and

the self-realizing concept that demonstrates the unity [of concept and being] *after* their differentiation via negation of negation.[135] Strictly speaking what proceeds from the negation of negation is not abstract being. Abstract being is sublated, negated. In this negation of negation, the concept objectifies and realizes itself as totality, and this totality, as unity in and through difference, is its actuality.[136]

To summarize, what Hegel's reconstructed ontological proof requires is that what is purely and simply *other*, the *contrary* of the concept, should proceed from the concept.[137] Thus Hegel holds that what the proof must prove is first of all that God includes being—this is entirely correct.[138] However, being here is *abstract*, and as such it is an impoverished deficient, determination. Abstract being is nothing more than abstract self-reference and identity: A = A, whatever is, is. However, even though impoverished and a deficiency, the subjective concept possesses an inner purposiveness, a drive toward self-actualization. Abstract being, far from being a real predicate that could add something to a concept, is instead a deficiency—namely, the one-sided subjective concept that is deficiently actual. That is why Hegel claims that the problem here is not to add a real predicate to a subject, but to remove from subjectivity the defect of being merely subjective.

Second, the proof must also show that concept and being are *different* from and *opposed* to each other.[139] This antithesis is the negative moment of the dialectic. In Hegel's view, Gaunilo's and Kant's objection that being is not a concept is a moment of the negative dialectic of the concept—that is, abstract being.

Third, the proof must demonstrate the unity of the two determinations—namely, concept and being. This unity of concept and being must be demonstrated in such a way that it *results* from the negation of their antithesis [that is, negation]. This negation of negation shows that being is not merely contained within the concept, but is the self-negation of the subjective concept and its dialectical self-realization. However, this inclusion of being in the concept does not exclude its difference from the concept. According to Hegel, the difference must be spoken of also and what has to be done is to establish the unity of concept and being *after* their differentiation—the task of the *Logic*.[140] Hegel asserts that "[being] is different from the concept, because it is not the entire concept but is only one of its determinations. . . . It is indeed different

being. Hegel declares that God's being is not limited, and so "it would be better to say God and his being, his *actuality* or objectivity" (*LPR* 1. 417). Actuality and objectivity are higher categories than mere being. On the category of actuality, see *EL* §142+Z.

[135] *LPR* 3. 180–1.

[136] The proof must show that God cannot be separated from being. God is necessary being. However, this cannot be asserted immediately without begging the question that makes proof and mediation superfluous.

[137] *LPR* 3. 177. [138] *LPR* 3. 180. [139] *LPR* 3. 180. [140] *LPR* 3. 180.

from the concept, but only as a determination of the concept."[141] In other words, the transition from concept to being is not made to abstract, arid being (abstract identity), but rather to the being that is negation of negation: this is the being or, better, the *actuality* (*Wirklichkeit*) that proceeds from the concept—that is, the self-objectification of the concept.[142]

6. THE RATIONAL BECOMES ACTUAL: ITS DRIVE TOWARD SELF-ACTUALIZATION

Hegel's correction of Anselm consists in grasping the movement of the concept as a self-mediating teleological activity of inner purposiveness (entelechy). Hegel seeks to make his point "palpable" through an analysis of end, need, and drive.

> Need and drive are the readiest examples of purpose. They are the felt contradiction as it occurs within the living subject itself; and they lead into the activity of negating this negation (which is what mere subjectivity still is). *Satisfaction* establishes peace between the subject and the object, since what is objective, what stands on the other side in the contradiction while it is still present (i.e., in the need), is sublated with respect to its one-sidedness by being united with the subjective—Those who talk so much about the stability and invincibility of the finite (whether subjective or objective) can find an example of the contrary in every drive. Drive is, so to speak, the certainty that the subjective is only one-sided and that it has no more truth than the objective. Drive, moreover, is the carrying out of the certainty that belongs to it; it accomplishes the sublation of this antithesis between the subjective that is and remains only something subjective and the objective that is and remains only something objective and of this finitude that belongs to each of them.[143]

Hegel interprets inner purposiveness through need and drive—a synthesis of Kant and Aristotle. Hegel conceives drive as an experienced or felt contradiction. The experience of contradiction in the self-relation evokes a drive to resolve the contradiction. The drive is or leads to action. Further, the satisfaction of the drive negates the finite subjectivity that remains merely or deficiently subjective, and establishes peace between subject and object, because what is objective—which stands on the other side in the felt contradiction, and is present in the need as potential to be realized—is sublated in its one-sidedness by being united with the subjective.

Hegel illustrates how the concept becomes actual through an analysis of drive (*Trieb*), and action *Handlung*.[144] The concepts of need and drive allow

[141] *LPR* 1. 437. [142] *LPR* 1. 426. [143] *EL* §204R. [144] *LPR* 1. 438–9.

Hegel to clarify that the abstract being that is inherent in every concept is a deficiency. Hegel distinguishes between the drive as merely subjective experienced deficiency, and its satisfaction. "When I have a drive, that is a condition of deficiency, something subjective. The satisfaction of the drive procures for me my feeling of self. If I am merely in a state of longing or striving, then I am nothing actual. The striving must come into existence."[145] Drive is the carrying-out of the certainty belonging to it—to wit, that its subjectivity is one-sided and defective, a non-actual, bare, unsatisfied selfhood. However,

> no human being is satisfied with a bare selfhood; the I is active, and *this activity is a self-objectifying, the giving of actuality and determinate being to oneself*. In its further and more concrete determination this activity of the concept (already in the animal and then also in the I or in spirit) is what we call a *drive*.[146]

This coming into existence of the drive is its satisfaction. The drive (*Trieb*) accomplishes the sublation of the contradiction between a merely one-sided subjective and a merely one-sided abstract objective:

> Every satisfaction of a drive is for the I this process of sublating subjectivity, and thus positing its subjective or inner being as something likewise external, objective and real. It is the process of bringing forth the unity of what is only subjective with the objective, of stripping away this one-sidedness from both of them.[147]

The satisfaction of the drive is a process of the I negating its one-sided subjectivity and giving itself a determinate existence, or realizing itself. Satisfaction is a sublation of one-sided or mere subjectivity that brings forth the unity of the subjective and the objective.

Conversely, the satisfaction of the drive is the realization of its purpose, and thus self-realization. The satisfaction of the drive is the movement of the end.

> The movement of the end can . . . now be expressed as having for its aim to sublate its presupposition . . . This negative attitude towards the object is just as much a negative attitude towards itself, a sublating of the subjectivity of the end. Positively it is the realization of the end . . . End is in its own self the urge [*Trieb*] to realize itself.[148]

Hegel's account of the drive and its satisfaction belongs to and is part of his theory of action:

> All the action in the world is a sublating of the subjective and a positing of the objective, and so is the production of the unity of both. There is nothing else of which everything is so illustrative as the sublating of the opposite and the bringing forth of the unity of the subjective and the objective.[149]

[145] *LPR* 1. 439. [146] *LPR* 1. 438; emphasis added.
[147] *LPR* 1. 438; emphasis added. [148] *SL* 742. [149] *LPR* 1. 439.

In Hegel's reconstruction, the ontological proof consists in the action of the concept that sublates and surpasses its one-sided subjectivity:

> To posit itself not only subjectively but also objectively, or neither subjectively nor objectively—that is what the concept is. Hence on the one hand, the concept has in itself this impoverished, abstract determination of being. *But inasmuch as it is differentiated—and because it is living it must be differentiated—the concept is just what, as living, negates the subjective and posits it objectively*.[150]

For Hegel, objectivity is dialectical: it is both the *opposite* of the subject and the *realization* of the subject.[151] The unity of subjectivity and objectivity is realized through and results from the negation of the abstract one-sided opposition. "In this consummation of the syllogism . . . the distinction of mediating and mediated has disappeared. That which is mediated is itself an essential moment of what mediates it, and each moment appears as the totality of what is mediated."[152] In this mediation that sublates mediation, "nothing is in and for itself, but each term is only by means of the other. The result is an *immediacy* that has resulted from the *sublating of the mediation*, a being which is no less identical with the mediation, and which is the concept that has restored itself out of and in, its otherness."[153] This objectivity is a self-developing totality.

The foregoing analysis of the drive also clarifies Hegel's position on the question whether abstract being is present in the concept. He expressly asserts this—that is, that abstract being lies in the concept and the *Logic* begins with it.[154] To assert this is not to lapse into question-begging immediacy that makes the proof superfluous. For such abstract being is like a need, a deficiency. But consciousness of the deficiency sets in motion an inner purposiveness—namely, to overcome the deficiency. In the movement of self-objectification, abstract, deficient being is negated and raised to objectivity—that is, in the drive towards self-actualization that satisfies the inner purposiveness of the concept. This is the point that Hegel seems to be suggesting in the following:

> [Being] is the wholly abstract and most meager definition that God is [abstract] relation to self. . . . being is different from the concept, because it is not the entire concept but only one of its determinations. . . . This is the simple insight, that being is within the concept. . . . It is indeed different from the concept, but only as a determination of the concept.[155]

To say that being is in the concept is to assert there is need, lack, deficiency in the concept. The satisfaction of the need overcomes the deficiency, by negating both the one-sided subjective subject and the one-sided objectivity. The result of this negation of negation is not "abstract arid being, but . . . the being that is

[150] *LPR* 1. 439. Cf. *EL* §204: the drive is the certainty that subjectivity is deficient and one-sided.
[151] *SL* 709; *ILH* 242, 256. [152] *SL* 703. [153] *SL* 704.
[154] *LPR* 1. [155] *LPR* 1. 437.

the negation of negation."[156] The conclusion of proof, interpreted as the satisfaction of the drive, need, or realization of inner purpose, is the actuality of the concept, because, as Hegel notes, the actual is precisely the sublation of abstract impoverished being, the sublation of Platonic *dynamis* in Aristotelian *Energeia*—that is, as the inner that is fully expressed, actuality (*Wirlichkeit*) in the emphatic sense of the term.[157]

Hegel believes that the abstract universal found in Anselm's proof, traditional theism, and in Kant's philosophy, has to be corrected. This is what Hegel believes he has accomplished in his lectures:

> What the concept does is to sublate its differentiation. . . . The concept is always this positing of being as identical with itself. The concept does not only have being within itself implicitly (*an sich*, in itself, as it is taken in abstract immediacy by metaphysics and Kantian philosophy), the concept is also being explicitly (i.e., it is for itself—it is not merely we who have this insight). It is not we but the concept itself that sublates its subjectivity itself and objectifies itself. . . . When we look closely at the nature of the concept, we see that its identity with being is no longer a presupposition but a *result*. What happens is that the concept objectifies itself, makes itself reality and thus becomes the truth, the unity of subject and object.[158]

What Hegel is after is, not only an interpretation of the ontological proof as objective idealism, but also an interpretation of objective idealism that has a trinitarian structure.

Thus Hegel writes:

> [Subjectivity] knows and acknowledges . . . a content that is necessary and that this necessary content is objective, having being in and for itself. . . . It is free reason . . . that develops the content in accord with its necessity and justifies the content of truth. . . . The Enlightenment of the understanding and Pietism volatilize all content. The purely subjective standpoint recognizes no content and hence no truth. The concept indeed *produces* the truth—this is subjective freedom—*but it recognizes this truth as at the same time not produced, as the truth that subsists in and for itself.*[159]

Hegel's analysis reflects the continuing importance of the ontological proof to both philosophy and theology. The opposition between concept and being, that the proof radicalizes, it also sublates. In this sublation the concept demonstrates that the rational is actual. It also makes clear that being's otherness to the concept is not absolute otherness, but rather a self-specification of the concept itself. The consummation of syllogistic development in disjunctive syllogism is

[156] *LPR* 1. 426. [157] *EL* §142+Z; cf. §§238–42.

[158] *Lecture on the Ontological Proof* (1931), in *LPR* 3. 356; also cited in *LProofs*, 191; emphasis added. Hegel observes that the traditional proofs overlook the negation of the opposed terms by the realization of the end in the speculative syllogism and teleology. Cf. *EL* §§50R, 192, 204R.

[159] *LPR* 3. 345. Note the speculative reversal that deconstructs the understanding's categories of relations of finite causality. See also Appendix to this chapter.

the complete self-specification of the universal wherein the universal becomes objective. Its objectivity, its self-realization, is a self-mediated immediacy: "the concept does not only have being within it implicitly . . . the concept is also being explicitly. It sublates its subjectivity and objectifies itself."[160]

For Hegel, reason is not the suppression but rather the sublimation of the drive.[161] In Hegel's view, like Aristotle's, rationality is a desire to know: "It is therefore not only the highest force, or rather the sole and absolute force of reason, but also its supreme and sole drive to find and cognize itself by means of itself in everything."[162] It is a drive that exhibits an immanent teleology, to wit, the actualization of rationality from its own resources—that is, the final causality of inner purposiveness. From this perspective the entire *Logic* is Hegel's reconstructed ontological proof.

This result is accepted as the starting point by the philosophy of religion in its account of the metaphysical concept of God.[163] For Hegel, God is no exception to his view of action, but rather its chief exemplification.

> The vitality of God or of spirit is nothing other than a self-determining . . . which involves difference and contradiction, but [is] at the same time an eternal sublating of this contradiction. This is the life, the deed, the activity of God; he is absolute activity, creative energy [*Aktuosität*], and his activity is to posit himself in contradiction, but eternally to resolve and reconcile this contradiction.[164]

Let us step back from these details in order to consider the larger picture in which Hegel sums up the thesis of the ontological proof in the *Logic* as the rational become actual. Hegel writes:

> The opinion that ideas and ideals are nothing but chimeras [that is, only concepts], and that philosophy is nothing but a system of such figments of the imagination, opposes itself to the actuality of what is rational; the same opposition is present in the opinion that ideas and ideals are far too excellent to possess mere actuality, or conversely in the opinion that they are something too impotent to achieve actuality. However, the severing of actuality from the idea is particularly dear to the understanding, which regards the dreams of its abstractions as something genuine, and which is deluded about the 'ought' that it likes to

[160] *Lecture on the Ontological Proof* (1831), in *LProofs*, 191.

[161] See my translator's introduction to Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit 1827–8* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 40–5). Hegel synthesizes Kant and Aristotle in a way that overcomes the formalism of Kant's ethics and the parochialism of Aristotle's ethics. Reason is not the suppression of drives but rather their sublimation.

[162] *SL* 826; emphasis added. Hegel is speaking of absolute method, which is an ontological analysis of knowing.

[163] This is clear in the 1824 Lectures (*LPR* 3. 173–84), but also evident in *LPR* 1. 367–9 (1827).

[164] *LPR* 3. 270–1. Cf. *SL* 759: "the idea possesses within itself . . . the most stubborn opposition; its repose consists in the security and certainty with which it eternally creates and eternally overcomes that opposition, in it meeting with itself."

> prescribe, especially in the political field—as if the world had to wait for the understanding to learn how it ought to be, but is not.[165]

In raising the issue of the "ought to be" Hegel is referring to the spurious infinity, which is the highest insight attainable in finite philosophies of reflection.[166] But the spurious infinite, *die schlechte Unendlichkeit*, by its opposition to the finite, demonstrates that it fails to achieve actuality as infinite, and thus is a finite–infinite. The spurious or leveled infinite presupposes, but falls short of, the true infinite, the idea, which includes the finite within itself as an ideal moment. The object of philosophical interest and concern is the true infinite—the idea, the unity in difference of concept and reality "which is not so impotent that it merely ought to be, and is not actual."[167] The absolute idea is that which is both implicitly the beginning and the end that results from itself. The true infinite is the rational that is actual because it actualizes itself.

7. METAPHYSICAL ILLUSION, DUALISM, AND HEGEL'S LOGICAL TRINITARIANISM

According to Kant, reason demands the unconditioned but is unable to think it. All attempts to think it end in metaphysical illusion, the hypostatization of a regulative idea. Yet, despite Kant's critique of metaphysics, he holds fast to the abstract universal idea as regulative heuristic principle in his theoretical philosophy; in his practical philosophy, the abstract universal is found in the moral law and the postulate of God. To be sure, in the *Second* and *Third Critiques* Kant appears to break down the radical dualism inherent in the *First*. The consciousness of freedom is an important exception to the negative *noumenon* doctrine. The fact of reason—the moral law—is the *ratio cognoscendi* of freedom, and the consciousness of freedom provides access to supersensible, though only for practical purposes. Conversely, freedom is the *ratio essendi* of the moral law, for only a free being is capable of apprehending and entertaining something that ought to be.

Hegel agrees with and praises Kant's claim that the consciousness of subjective freedom is the starting point for the elevation of spirit to God. "Thus we have the standpoint of absoluteness revealed, since *there is an infinite disclosed within the human breast. The satisfying part in Kant's*

[165] *EL* §6R. [166] *LPR* 1. 298–300.

[167] *EL* §6R; cf. §142Z: "The Idea is not at all something so impotent that whether it is realized or not depends on our own sweet will; on the contrary it is at once what is quite simply effective and actual as well." Hegel contrasts the Platonic Idea as *dynamis*, to the Aristotelian *energeia*—*Wirklichkeit*.

philosophy is that the truth is at least set within the heart."[168] However, Hegel believes that Kant undermined his own discovery of the connection between freedom and divine immanence by his unsatisfactory doctrine of the postulates of practical reason.[169] According to Kant, these postulates are only subjectively necessary, valid only for practical purposes, and fall short of cognition. They express a moral faith, but not a theology. For Hegel, the moral vision of the world, including the God-postulate, are themselves illusions on Kant's own grounds—namely, they involve contradictions that constitute a purely negative dialectic.

For example, running throughout Kant's moral world view is a fundamental contradiction—to wit, the belief that there is a moral being and consciousness, and the belief that there is none.[170]

> The moral world-view is . . . in fact nothing other than the elaboration of this fundamental contradiction in its various aspects. It is, to employ here a Kantian expression where it is most appropriate, a 'whole nest' of contradictions. The way in which consciousness proceeds . . . is to establish one moment and to pass directly from it to another, setting aside the first; but now, as soon as it has set up this second moment, it also sets it aside again, and . . . makes the opposite moment the essential one. At the same time it is also aware of its contradiction and shiftiness, for it passes from one moment, *immediately* in its relation to this very moment, over to the opposite. *Because* a moment has no reality for it, it posits the very same moment as *real*. . . . In so doing it confesses that, as a matter of fact, it is not serious about either of them.[171]

Further, the moral world view assumes both that morality is already in existence, and that what is actual does not accord with morality. Thus in moral action,

> the place given to actuality is displaced; for action is nothing other than . . . the production of an actuality determined by the [inner] purpose. . . . Action therefore, in fact directly fulfills what was asserted could not take place, what was supposed to be merely a postulate, merely a beyond. Consciousness proclaims through its deed that it is not serious in making its postulate, because the meaning of the action . . . is . . . to make into a present reality what was not supposed to exist in the present.[172]

On the other hand, the harmony of the inner purpose and actuality must be so *in itself*—otherwise its actuality would not be possible—that is, "ought would not imply 'can'." Consequently, the connection of action and postulate is so constituted that "for the sake of the *actual* harmony of purpose and actuality, this harmony is postulated as *not* actual, i.e., as a beyond."[173] Kant's account of the moral world view presents its elements and moments in perpetual

[168] *LHP* 3. 458; *E.* §552. [169] *E.* §552. [170] *PhS* §§612–13; emphasis added.
[171] *PhS* §617. [172] *PhS* §618. [173] *PhS* §618.

dissembling and disintegration. For example, in Kant's postulation of God for moral purposes,

> *The actuality of God . . . does not enter into consciousness at all.* It is accepted by consciousness for the sake of the harmony of the highest good in which nature is conformed to rational will. The ground on which God is accepted—that by the conception of a holy law-giver the moral law may acquire additional reverence—contradicts the fact that morality really consists in reverence for the law simply for its own sake.[174]

The moral world view can be sustained only by dissembling that conceals the fact that Kant is not serious about the god-postulate; besides, his moral vision of the world does not need it.[175] For Hegel both the God-postulate of morality and the moral God are dissemblances of the unresolved dualism inherent in morality and the ought.[176] For Hegel, the moral law is the abstract universal before which the individual is condemned to death.[177] But religion is not reducible to condemnation such as the moral vision of the world upholds, for religion includes and emphasizes reconciliation and freedom.

Hegel appreciates that, in the *Third Critique*, Kant softens the opposition between theoretical and practical reason, and retrieves Aristotle's concept of inner purposiveness in his conception of organism. "An organic being is, according to Kant, one in which natural mechanism and end are identical. We regard it *as if* there dwelt in the sensible object a notion [entelechy] which brings the particular into conformity with itself. In the organic products of nature we perceive this *immediate unity of concept and reality*."[178] Thus Kant has a concept of the concrete universal, but Kant takes it only in a subjective sense as a subjective maxim of judgment, or a heuristic principle. Whenever Kant speaks of the unity of concept and reality—a phrase that defines the absolute idea in the *Logic*—he immediately emphasizes that it is only subjective. "He will not throw off his limitations in the moment in which he assumes them as limitations. This is the perpetual contradiction in Kant's philosophy."[179] Hegel believes that there is a reason for this contradiction: "This is the consummate philosophy of the understanding that renounces reason."[180] In deciding for the skeptical understanding against reason in the idealist sense and against the ontological proof, Kant in effect determined that "the true idea is not the truth. The reason it is not the truth is that the empty abstractions of

[174] *LHP* 3. 463; emphasis added.
[175] *PhS* §§626–32. More fundamentally, the contradiction is that there is a moral world and there is none. Both sides of the contradiction are affirmed by Kant as necessary. Morality is essentially constituted by the gap between what ought to be and what is. But, in its consummation, morality would abolish that gap and thus abolish itself. The God-postulate is a sideshow, a spurious value and perspective that is part of the dissemblance.
[176] *SL* 131–6. [177] *ETW* 225–6. [178] *LHP* 3. 472.
[179] *LHP* 3. 472. [180] *LHP* 3. 476.

an understanding that keeps itself in the abstract universal, and of a sensuous material of individuality standing in opposition to the universal, are presupposed as the truth."[181]

Hegel holds that the highest resolution of the contradictions of finitude possible within the Kantian–Fichtean system is embodied in the ought, the spurious infinite that, because it is *opposed* to the finite, is itself a *finite–infinite*.[182] This is the infinite that only *ought* to be. Reason degenerates into a spurious, leveled infinite.

These issues are further explicated by Hegel in his discussion of the absolute idea in his *Encyclopedia Logic*. Here he addresses Kant's claims that contradiction is negative and symptomatic of metaphysical illusion, and he turns the charge of illusion back onto Kant. Kant would allege that the identity of thought and being constitutive of the absolute idea confuses the existence of the idea with the mere concept of it. Since the idea is not met with in any sensible intuition, and since Kant denies human mind the capacity for intellectual intuition, metaphysical illusion is not easily detectible, and can mislead us even when we understand that it is always possible. For Kant, the truth of the matter is the sheer otherness and difference of concept and reality, thought and being: concepts without intuitions are empty. If taken as absolute, this is a skeptical thesis that is self-refuting (it is true that there is no truth). To be sure, Kant is no skeptic about the mathematical sciences of sensible experience,[183] but he is a skeptic about rational metaphysics.

In contrast, Hegel would claim that, if anything is an illusion, it is rather the absolute difference and absolute separation of concept and existence insisted upon by the understanding and subjective idealism, and the contradictory ought of the moral world view.[184] Hegel explicates the absolute idea as the consummation of the ontological proof in the *Encyclopedia Logic*. In Hegel's reconstruction of the ontological proof, the absolute idea is the true infinite—to wit, an organized whole and totality that unites in itself the determinations that the understanding holds to be fixed and true only in a state of separation from each other. For Hegel such determinations, when separated and fixed in opposition, are finite, and thus untrue.

[181] *LHP* 3. 472–3. Cf. the *Logic*: "It will always stand as a marvel that how the Kantian philosophy recognized the relation of thought to sensible reality, beyond which it did not advance, as only a relative relation of mere appearance, and perfectly well recognized and enunciated a higher unity of both in the idea . . . and yet stopped short at this relative relation and the assertion that the concept is and remains utterly separate from reality—thus asserting as truth what it declared to be finite cognition, and denouncing as an unjustified extravagance and a figment of thought what it recognized as truth . . ." (*SL* 592).

[182] *SL* 131–6; *LPR* 1. 284–8, 296–300.

[183] *Difference*, 80.

[184] Hegel calls the moral vision of the world the illusion in which we live. *EL* §212Z.

In his *Encyclopedia* Hegel contrasts Kant's views with his own. This contrast summarizes the disputed issues between them from Hegel's perspective. Hegel begins with the absolute idea:

> The idea can be grasped as reason (this is the proper philosophical meaning of "reason"), and further as the Subject–Object, as the unity of the ideal and the real, of the finite and the infinite, of the soul and the body, as the possibility that has its actuality in itself, as that whose nature can be comprehended only as existing, and so forth. It can grasped in all these ways because all the relationships of the understanding are contained in the idea, but in their infinite self-return and self-identity.[185]

It is evident that the absolute idea includes the ontological proof as that nature whose essence and existence are inseparable and that therefore can be comprehended only as existing.[186] The idea is the possibility that possesses actuality in itself. The idea is the essentially concrete, fully explicated concept, the concept that determines itself, organizes its conditions and members, and thus makes itself actual. As its own ontological proof, the idea is an objective idealism.

Hegel concedes that "It is an easy task for the understanding to show that everything asserted about the idea is *self-contradictory*."[187] For Kant, contradiction is a symptom of metaphysical illusion—for example, the unconditioned, the absolutely necessary, that is an abyss for human reason; it tempts us to hypostatize a merely regulative principle of our reason as constitutive, and "confound the existence of the thing with the mere concept of it."[188] Hegel summarizes Kant's critique as follows:

> The understanding shows that the idea contradicts itself, because the subjective, for instance, is merely subjective and the objective is really opposed to it; that being is something quite other than the concept so that it cannot be "plucked out of it;" likewise the finite is merely finite and the exact opposite of the infinite so that it is not identical with it—and so on, through all determinations one after the other.[189]

As Hegel sees it, Kant grasps the elements reconciled and united in the absolute idea, but only in their disintegration—to wit, their abstract separation and otherness. Hegel focuses on Kant's view that dialectic and contradiction are negative, symptoms that reason has exceeded its limits, rather than expressing insight into realities. Hegel criticizes Kant for shifting contradiction from objective things in the world to reason itself. "Here we have this tenderness towards things that will not allow any contradiction to attach to them, although the most superficial and also the most profound experience

[185] *EL* §214. [186] *EL* §51R. [187] *EL* §214R.
[188] *First Critique*, A600/B628–A601/B629. [189] *EL* §214R.

shows everywhere that . . . things are full of contradictions."[190] Elsewhere Hegel renews the charge that Kant shows too much tenderness for things, and adds: "It would be a pity, he thinks, if they contradicted themselves. But that spirit, mind, which is far higher, should be a contradiction—that is not a pity at all."[191] By shifting the locus of contradiction from the world to the human mind, Kant leaves contradictions themselves unresolved, and portrays the mind struggling to maintain itself in contradiction as if it were demented instead of rational.

Hegel replies that Kant's charges that contradiction signifies illusion can be returned and "sent home" to the understanding itself.

> The *Logic* demonstrates the opposite instead: namely, that the subjective that is supposed to be merely subjective, the finite that is supposed to be merely finite, and the infinite that is supposed to be merely infinite, and so on, do not have any truth; they contradict themselves and pass over into their opposites.—As a result, the passing over and the unity, in which the extremes are present as sublated—i.e., as a shining [into each other] or as moments—reveals itself as their truth.[192]

Kant and the understanding grasp the elements of the idea in their finitude and disintegration, and take this disintegration into separateness as final. Thus Kant "holds being and concept rigidly apart, each as self-identical."[193] This is Kant's reason for asserting that the ontological proof fails—for existence, cannot be plucked from empty arbitrarily constructed concepts.

Hegel explains how the understanding misunderstands the idea:

> First, it still takes the extremes of the idea (express them any way you please, as long as they are in their unity) in the sense and determination that they have when they are *not* in their concrete unity, but are only abstractions outside of it. It equally fails to recognize their relation even when it has been expressly posited. For instance, it overlooks the very nature of the copula in the judgment, which says that the singular, or the subject, is not just singular but universal as well.[194]

Hegel observes that thought which is confined or restricted to sense experience is oriented towards the view that everything is external to everything else. For the understanding too, non-being is other than being; thus the understanding, like the senses, holds fast to abstract characteristics in such a way that each exists on its own account.[195] The principles of the understanding are abstract identity and non-contradiction. According to abstract identity, the one and the other are independent, each for itself, yet at the same time they are related to each other. This [relation] is what is called inconceivable, because the understanding starts with the presupposition that the two distinguished moments are and remain utterly independent of each other.[196] Thus the understanding,

[190] *LProofs*, 158. [191] *LHP* 3. 451. [192] *EL* §214R. [193] *LProofs*, 190, 1831.
[194] *EL* §214R. [195] *LPR* 3. 192. [196] *LPR* 3. 283.

separated from reason and left to itself, tends towards metaphysical atomism.[197] Such atomism overlooks the very nature of the copula "is" in judgments that identify the singular subject with universal predicates. Similarly, the understanding prefers mechanistic explanations, according to which the terms *in* relation remain what they are *apart* from relation; their relation does not affect them and is external to them.[198]

Where for Kant speculative reason hypostatizes regulative ideas as constitutive realities, for Hegel the understanding reifies the extremes of the syllogism/idea, and takes them in their unity in the sense that they have in abstract isolation. The subjective is just subjective, and the objective is just objective. Hence the understanding sees in the idea only contradiction, and is oblivious to the inseparability of the terms as they have coalesced in relation and community. However, the understanding's destruction of the idea turns on the impossibility of self-contradiction: contradiction for Kant is a sign and symptom of metaphysical illusion and madness.

On the contrary, Hegel believes that what appears to the understanding as inconceivable because it is contradictory is precisely the concept or reason itself.[199] Hegel believes that reason can employ the relations of the understanding only by destroying them and correcting their untruth. The subject that is supposed to be merely subjective, finite, and opposed to the infinite, the infinite that is merely finite (opposed to the finite) have no truth. Having no truth means that these abstractions are self-contradictory and pass over into their opposites. But everything concrete contains contradiction, endures it, and resolves it.[200] Indeed, whoever claims that nothing exists that carries in itself a contradiction in the form of an identity of opposites is at the same time requiring that nothing living shall exist.[201] Hence for Hegel contradiction is not a sign of metaphysical illusion, but rather a sign of life and creativity that excites and propels things towards real relations, self-development, and self-realization. Hegel holds that "in fact reason can at all events bear the contradiction and surely resolve it."[202] For Hegel "contradiction moves the

[197] *EL* §§97–8.

[198] *EL* §§135–6. Fichte gives a confusing account of mutual recognition when he affirms that "at the basis of all voluntarily chosen reciprocal interaction among free beings there lies an original and necessary reciprocal interaction . . . which is this: the free being by his mere presence in the world, compels every other free being without qualification to recognize him as a person. . . . In this way a common cognition emerges, and nothing more. *Both recognize each other . . . but they are isolated as before*." Fichte is a better Kantian than Hegelian here. He lapses into the mechanistic view of relation that contradicts his original assertion of an original necessary reciprocal interaction constitutive of personhood. See J. G. Fichte, *Foundations of Natural Right*, trans. Michael Baur (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 79.

[199] *LPR* 3. 282. Cf. *EL* §231R: "As so often happens . . . we find that terminology is stood on its head: what is called 'rational' belongs to the understanding, while what is called 'irrational' is rather the beginning and the first trace of rationality."

[200] *LPR* 3. 193. [201] *Aesthetics*, 1. 120. [202] *LProofs*, 158.

world."[203] For this reason, "it is the concern of reason . . . not to remain with the finite and untrue, nor to take them as something absolute."[204]

> But even according to the ordinary view, a concept devoid of being is something one-sided and untrue, just as being is too—the being that is devoid of concept. *This antithesis [between concept and being] that is found in finitude can in no wise occur in what is infinite, God.*[205]

The absolute idea or God is no exception to affirmative dialectic and contradiction, but rather its chief exemplification:

> The identity of the idea with itself is one with the process; the thought which liberates actuality from the illusory show of purposeless mutability and transfigures it into the idea must not represent this truth of actuality as a dead repose, a mere still life picture without impulse or movement, as a . . . number, or abstract thought; by virtue of the freedom which the concept attains in the idea, the idea possesses within itself also the most stubborn opposition; its repose consists in the security and certainty with which it eternally creates and eternally overcomes that opposition, in it coalescing with itself.[206]

For Hegel, contradiction is not the breakdown of relation, as Kant suggests, but rather a form of relation and life. Contradiction is the point of transition from one opposite to another that mediates them and that constitutes their inseparability and relation. Contradiction is not simply negative and destructive but also creative and affirmative: for overcoming contradiction forges relations and creates new unities and concrescences. In the *Aufhebung*, the terms fixed by the understanding spontaneously catch fire and unite with each other and with the whole,[207] the true infinite, of which they are members. This higher concrescence is their truth.

This concrescence is an articulated whole or totality. In such an articulated whole, both identity and difference are necessary. If identity is suppressed, the whole disintegrates into unrelated fragments. On the other hand, if difference is suppressed, the whole likewise ceases to be articulated and becomes abstract, undifferentiated identity or oneness, monism.[208] In abstract identity, since there are no distinctions or differences, there is nothing to unify. In both cases relations are undermined. For there can be no terms in relation unless they can be mutually distinguished. However, if the distinctions are absolute differences, relations are equally rendered impossible. These issues can be resolved only by the philosophical trinitarianism of the concept.

[203] *EL* §119Z2. [204] *LPR* 3. 70. [205] *LProofs*, 190; emphasis added.
[206] *SL* 759; translation modified.
[207] On the Heraclitean fire metaphor, and the role of the understanding's fixing of terms in generating such spontaneous combustion, cf. *SL* 610–12.
[208] See *FTDT*, ch. 8.

From this perspective, for Hegel what the ontological proof is about is the irreducibility and tenacity of relation. It is about terms that, on the one hand, are irreducible, cannot be simply identified, and, on the other hand, cannot be simply separated. God as concept cannot be grasped apart from being, and being is the self-specification of the concept, in which it sublates its own subjective one-sidedness. If terms can be neither identified nor separated, then they must be related. For Hegel *the inseparability of concept and being, of essence and existence, is not only constitutive of the absolute idea* (or in theological terms, the concept of God); *it is also the principle of organism and organized being, the true infinite*.

> The concept is, however, the deepest and the highest thing; it is the nature of *every* concept to sublate its deficiency, its subjectivity, this difference from being; it is itself the action of bringing itself forth as having being objectively.[209]

Organized being on all its levels is a concrescence of contradictory elements that grow together and become inseparable. Organized being is an identity of identity and difference. God is not an exception, but the highest exemplification of such organized being as totality.

The understanding takes its own reflection that the idea is self-contradictory as an external reflection—that is, as not true of the idea itself. The understanding persists in opposition and regards the idea as metaphysical illusion or treats it only in a regulative sense as a heuristic principle. However, the idea has a constitutive dialectic that corrects the products of the understanding—the abstract identity that suppresses all difference and paradoxically has nothing to relate or unify, and the abstract difference where everything is other than everything else, but if related, is related only by sheer external force. The idea possesses the persuasive power of final causality; it helps the understanding to realize the falsity of its one-sided abstractions and of the isolated independence of its products, and so leads it back to an articulated totality.[210]

Hegel's reconstructed ontological proof is manifest in the self-actualization of the absolute idea that is the result of the *Logic*. There is a reversal of the apparent starting point of the *Logic*—abstract being—and the apparently

[209] *LPR* 1. 438 n. 162.

[210] *EL* §§204, 214R. Elsewhere Hegel comments: "the ancients did not know what they really possessed in these forms [triad, triplicity] namely, that they contained the consciousness of absolute truth" (*LPR* 3. 81). This is a reference to the logos doctrine of Heraclitus, to the logos doctrine in the prologue to the Fourth Gospel, to the Hindu and Neoplatonic trinities, and of course the classical Christian doctrine of trinity. More precisely, what Hegel is extracting from these sources is a holistic theory of reciprocal relations that includes, corrects, and transcends the Platonic dyad and the Aristotelian *noesis noeseos*, which are binaries. According to Stanley Rosen, in this way Hegel overcomes the nihilism that accompanies the history of philosophy, including Parmenides monism, Platonic–Aristotelian dualism, Kant's dualism, etc.

derivative result—the absolute idea. Because of this reversal, the absolute idea is not a dependent result, but rather the true beginning:

> The [logical] process is so determined that even this starting point, the first moment from which we begin—whether it be the logical abstraction of being, or the finite world, the moment that appears to be immediate and therefore not posited—is itself posited in the result as something posited and no longer as something immediate; it is reduced from an immediate to a posited status, so that absolute spirit is what is true, rather than that first moment.[211]

This reversal of apparent starting point—abstract being—and the apparently derivative result—absolute idea—is a reversal that manifests an immanent necessity. This necessity is the unification in difference of the *ordo cognoscendi* and the *ordo essendi*.[212] It is the same reversal that is manifest in the elevation of subjective spirit to God.[213]

Thus Hegel's reconstruction of the ontological proof becomes the immanent foundation of his speculative theory of teleological, organized being that is found not only in nature, but also on higher levels of spirit—persons, families, ethical life, and, on the highest level, the true infinite—which includes the personhood of the absolute idea and triune absolute spirit. Hegel is not exaggerating when he writes that "without at least some acquaintance with the concept of the concept . . . nothing can be understood of the nature of God as spirit as such."[214]

APPENDIX

Reply to Rosen's Objections to Hegel's Ontological Proof

Rosen's critical assessment of Hegel's ontological proof is found in his general remarks at the opening of chapter 20 of his book *The Idea of Hegel's "Science of Logic."*[215] The irony is that Rosen does not approve of Hegel's reconstruction and prefers the original proof. Rosen identifies the ontological proof entirely with its traditional forms, whereas Hegel claims that "we must discard the form of the understanding."[216] Many of Rosen's criticisms presuppose metaphysical and theological positions (abstract identity—monism—and dualism—abstract difference, atomism) that, on Rosen's account, have led to the contemporary nihilism, which, Rosen claims, Hegel's trinitarianism overcomes. However, this trinitarianism is anchored by the ontological proof in the Logic of the concept. Rosen must choose between Hegel's trinitarianism (which he affirms as the remedy against nihilism) and his own criticisms of Hegel's

[211] *LPR* 1. 322; cf. *EL* § 242: the realization of the idea as end is the vanishing of the appearance that the beginning (being) is something immediate and that the idea is a result. This is the [systematic] cognition that the idea is the one totality.
[212] *LPR* 1. 321–2. [213] *EL* §§192–3; *LPR* 1. 321–2, 419–25.
[214] *LProofs*, 81. [215] *HSL* 451–2. [216] *LPR* 2. 253.

revised ontological proof, for these tend to reinstate the "pre-Hegel" and "post-Hegel" conditions that Rosen claims either are nihilism or produce it. Rosen overlooks that Hegel's reconstruction of the proof presupposes his critique of classical theism and religious orthodoxy, and that Hegel's intent is not to destroy the Christian religion or the ontological proof, but to strip away their outmoded, distorting forms, and to salvage, preserve, and defend their content by regenerating it from the concept. However, for the Rosen who in this case becomes Hegel's critic, any departure from classical theism is problematic: he charges that Hegel is not an orthodox Christian.

Comments on Rosen's Objections

(1) Rosen invokes orthodox Christianity as his criterion for assessing Hegel's theological thought, as if orthodox Christianity were an unproblematic timeless standard that has somehow managed to survive the corrosive influences of its own self-criticism, as well as fend off the nihilism, chaos, and relativism of modernity. Hegel does not believe that orthodoxy is a timeless standard, because in his day orthodoxy had already become positive, authoritarian, a source of alienation and nihilism. Like classical metaphysics and logic, orthodox Christianity needed a remodeling job.

Rosen considers *Hegel's Philosophy of Religion*, *Lectures on the Proofs* to be exoteric, merely popular works, not part of Hegel's system—that is, *Logic*. He also ignores Walter Jaeschke's claim that Hegel seeks to salvage Christianity and regenerate it out of the concept—a regeneration that cannot simply repeat or reinstate orthodoxy. Hegel believes that both classical metaphysics and theology are in late if not terminal stages of ossification. His task is to rekindle the spontaneity of life—that is, of the concept, in dead fossilized materials, both philosophical and theological.[217] What emerges from Hegel's reconstruction is not only the *Logic*, but also Hegel's deconstruction of the nihilistic moral vision of the world with its abstract universal before which every individual stands condemned, and a reshaping of Christianity as a religion of a tragically suffering divine love (incarnation and the death of God) that seeks reconciliation, affirms freedom, and creates community.

Of course, reconstructing Christian theology is not Rosen's concern, but, to be clear, it *is* one of Hegel's concerns. Indeed it is *this* concern that led Hegel to become a speculative philosopher in the first place, because he saw that, in order to reconstruct Christianity, it was also necessary to reconstruct the philosophical categories in which it thought and expressed itself.[218] The irony is that, while Rosen is correct in identifying Hegel's philosophical trinitarianism of the concept as a plausible overcoming of nihilism, he dismisses Hegel's theological trinitarianism as exoteric and complains that it is not orthodox Christianity.

[217] Hegel writes in the preface to the *Logic* of the concept, "for the logic of the concept, a completely ready-made, solidified and one may say *ossified* material is already to hand, and the problem is to *render this material fluid and to rekindle the spontaneity of the concept in such dead matter*. If the building of a new city in a waste land is attended with difficulties, yet there is no shortage of materials; but the abundance of materials presents all the more obstacles of another kind when the task is to *remodel* an ancient city, solidly built, and maintained in continuous possession and occupation. Among other things one must resolve to make no use at all of much material that has hitherto been highly esteemed" (*SL* 575). For example, in his 1831 Lectures, Hegel drops the concept of the Fall and original sin—the moral vision of the world—from his account of the Christian religion.

[218] See Introduction.

In Rosen's interpretation, Anselm's ontological proof is essentially tied to the abstract transcendence and dualism of substance metaphysics—that is, it establishes an infinite opposed to the finite. For Hegel, these metaphysical doctrines are deeply problematic for they distort and undermine the traditional proof. For Hegel, Anselm's proof is the absolute idea, but expressed in disintegration in the categories of pre-critical metaphysics of the understanding.

(2) Rosen's discussion of the proof falls back into the oppositions of the reflective metaphysics of the understanding. The concept disintegrates into the understanding's categories of abstract identity and abstract difference. Rosen then points out a problem with this reduced concept—for example, that the cognitive identity of knower and known entails their ontological identity. Rosen claims Hegel asserts that man is God—that is, that to know God requires that one be God. This caricatures Hegel's claim that religion is a relation of spirit to spirit and involves both community and a communal–recognitive mode of knowing.[219]

Hegel often points out that Anselm's proof, while brilliant, suffers from the defects of traditional metaphysics, including its concept of abstract identity. Thus in its traditional form it fails as a proof, principally because "metaphysics has subjected the simple thoughts of Anselm to the formality of argument, and has thereby deprived them of their true meaning and content."[220] Anselm himself did not possess the dialectical concept, which both posits the difference between thought and being, and preserves their difference. This unity in difference overcomes the defects of abstract identity.[221]

Moreover, when Hegel confronted and responded to the objection that to know God one must be God, he points out that it depends on the abstract identity that excludes difference, rather than the speculative identity that is a unity in difference.[222] The speculative unity in difference implies that there can be cognitive identity between knower and known without entailing their ontological identity.[223]

Rosen himself grasps this crucial distinction and point elsewhere in his book when he asserts that, according to Hegel, the absolute is fully visible, both to itself and to us, "the logicians who study the *SL*, because we are able to think through all the logical determinations that Hegel describes, and thereby not merely rise to the level of the absolute, but to become *unified with it, as usual, in an identity within difference*."[224] Here Rosen clearly recognizes that Hegel's trinitarian concept preserves the difference in unity with identity. His criticism that Hegel's ontological proof suppresses difference is baffling, because it aligns Rosen with the philosophies he rejected in principle when he claimed *rightly* that Hegel is neither monist nor dualist but trinitarian.

(3) Rosen fails to consider the theological significance of Hegel's category of the true infinite, and its critique and overcoming of metaphysical dualism: namely, an infinite opposed to the finite shows itself by that opposition to be a finite–infinite or spurious infinite.[225] Hegel's concept of the true infinite—which he calls the most important doctrine of philosophy—is the infinite that includes the finite. Conversely,

[219] *LProofs*, 126. [220] *LPR* 3. 71; cf. *LPR* 3. 180–1. [221] *LPR* 3. 180–1.
[222] Hegel, "Review of Göschel Aphorisms," in *MW* 415.
[223] Cf. Hegel's comments on the confusion of abstract identity of the understanding with the speculative identity as unity in difference in the context of the ontological proof in *EL* §§192–3.
[224] *HSL* 404; *KL* 8038. [225] *SL* 137.

the finite does not remain in opposition to the infinite as something independent of it, but sublates itself in union with the infinite, becoming an ideal moment.[226] The doctrine of the true infinite depends on the ideality of the finite—that is, a relative, dependent moment within the infinite.[227] The true infinite is a doctrine of community.[228] Hegel expounds the true infinite category in both the *Logic* and the *Philosophy of Religion*, where it is one of the few categories of the *Logic* that Hegel employs-a fact that should be pondered by those who, like Rosen, dismiss the *Philosophy of Religion* as exoteric, or who deny that the true infinite belongs to the speculative nucleus of the *Logic* and is a philosophical theology.

(4) In posing objections to Hegel's ontological proof, Rosen abruptly and without explanation develops a preference for the abstract non-dialectical categories of the understanding that by his own account enforce dualism and generate nihilism. Rosen appears to ignore his own correct claims that Hegel opposes formalization in philosophy, that Hegel does not detach the forms of proof from motions or processes of conceptual thinking, and that his concern is to describe these motions in language that exhibits the movement it describes.[229]

Now, however, Rosen asserts that, by assimilating it to his logic, Hegel distorts the ontological proof, which intends to prove, not the identity within difference of God and creation, but only that God necessarily exists, and that this necessity is intelligible to finite or created beings. The ontological proof does not claim that *God grows out of his concept*, which is in fact *our* concept of God's nature.

Hegel believes that it is important to distinguish and keep clear *how things are in the order of our knowing* (the order in which we prove something), and *how things are in the order of being*. Jacobi blurred and confused this distinction when he claimed that to prove God is to condition the unconditioned. Hegel responds to Jacobi and Rosen as follows:

> The proposition does not state, and is not meant to state, that the absolutely necessary has conditions and indeed is conditioned—quite the contrary. The whole process of making the connection exists only in the act of proving. It is only our knowledge of the absolutely necessary being that is conditioned by the starting point. The absolutely necessary *does not exist by raising itself out of the world of contingency*. . . . What has to be thought as something mediated by an other, as something dependent and conditioned, cannot be the absolutely necessary, cannot be God. It is the *content* of the proof itself that corrects the defect that is visible on its [subjective] form.[230]

Human knowledge begins—that is, starts—from something other than the absolute. But the absolutely necessary starts only from itself—that is, it is self-grounding. Hegel acknowledges that, while the issue of connecting these different perspectives is present

[226] Giacomo Rinaldi identifies the true infinite as the speculative nucleus of Hegel's philosophy. See *HILH*.

[227] *EL* §95R. "This ideality of the finite is the most important proposition of philosophy, and for that reason every genuine philosophy is idealism. . . . The basic concept of philosophy—the true infinite [*die wahrhafte Unendlichkeit*]—depends on it." Cf. *SL* 129–50. See also *LPR* 1. 288–314; *LPR* 3. 414–24; *LProofs*, 108. Cf. Robert Williams, "Hegel's Concept of the True Infinite," *Owl of Minerva*, 42/1–2 (2010–11), 89–122.

[228] See *LProofs*, 126.

[229] *HSL* 4–5; *KL* 106–16.

[230] *LProofs*, 112; emphasis added.

in all the proofs, it becomes explicit in the relation of the cosmological to the ontological proof:

> What is necessary in itself must show that it has its beginning within itself. . . . This requirement is indeed the only interesting point and it must be assumed that it lay at the basis of the . . . vexation experienced by Kant in having to show that the cosmological proof rests on the ontological. *The sole question is how to . . . combine the two considerations that the infinite starts from an other and yet in so doing starts only from itself.*[231]

Hegel's philosophy as a system[232] is constructed to deal with this issue. The *Logic* does not begin immediately with the absolute *as absolute*, but with a starting point *other than* the absolute. In this sense Hegel is anti-foundationalist. The starting point, abstract being, is a deficiency, but it is also endowed with a drive towards realization. In the categorical development from abstract being to absolute idea there is a reversal of the starting point (*ordo cognoscendi*) and result (*ordo essendi*): the true beginning of the *Logic* is not its starting point, but rather its apparently mediated, dependent *result*—the absolute idea. The self-grounding actualization of the idea sublates the appearance that the beginning is an immediate independent *given*, and that the idea is a mediated, dependent *result*.

Moreover, the logical process of the absolute's "development" is not a temporal process. Rosen is plainly aware of this when he writes:

> In Hegel's teaching, it is the dialectical activity of negativity that both separates and identifies being from thinking. Hegel is thus neither a monist nor a dualist but a trinitarian. On his view, being and thinking were never separated but instead have always constituted an identity within difference.[233]

Although Rosen does not seem to realize it, his last sentence expresses Hegel's reconstructed ontological proof: if being and thinking were never separated, but have always constituted an identity in and through difference, this implies (1) that the *Logic* is a self-grounding ontological proof—namely, (2) that concept and being, concept and objectivity, are irreducible, yet necessarily related. As such, concept and being are *inseparable*; consequently, they constitute an articulated whole or totality; (3) we thinkers can think this totality as a unity in and through difference, but we are not ourselves this totality. In other words, we do not arbitrarily invent, much less possess, the totality of the absolute idea (concept and being); rather if anything *it possesses us*—that is, we follow its immanent self-grounding logical movement.

Hegel expresses this movement thus: it is

> not that within me there is anything that is certain and stands fast, but that there is within me *that which stands fast for itself*, *objective in and for itself*, established within me, i.e., *it is grounded within itself, is determined in and for itself*. Such, however, is the pure concept.[234]

[231] "Fragment on the Cosmological Proof," in *LProofs*, 157; emphasis added.

[232] The *Phenomenology* is intended as an introduction to the system, providing the ladder to the absolute standpoint. To a lesser extent, the *Logic* also combines the two considerations, it begins with abstract being and culminates via reversal in the absolute idea. Hegel's resolution of the issue is stated most succinctly and clearly in *EL* §§95, 242, 243.

[233] *HSL* 226; *KL* 4568–70.

[234] *LPR* 1. 249–50. The concept *stands fast for itself*, is objective *in and for itself*. These terms echo and reflect the self-grounding, self-realizing concept, the principle of the ontological proof.

Rosen's thesis that Hegel is a conceptual trinitarian takes care of his objection that, in Hegel's account of the ontological proof, God "grows out of his concept," which is in fact *our* concept, or "*only* a concept." On the contrary, this is the mistake that Kant and Rosen both make: this "only" reduces the concept of God to contingent finitude. For Hegel we must get rid of *this* "only."[235] God is emphatically that which *can only be thought as existing*.[236] "God is not a concept, but the concept."[237]

[235] *LPR* 3. 69. [236] *EL* §51R.

[237] *LPR* 3. 71. Hegel may echo here Mendelssohn's defense of the proof against Kant's "refutation" that existence is not a predicate. On the contrary, for Mendelssohn as for Spinoza, the proof turns on the logical difference between infinite and finite. Existence cannot be separated from the idea of absolute necessity without destroying the idea itself. "I must think the thing itself [*Sache*] along with the concept, or simply let go of the concept. The whole matter rests on this important distinction and the distinction in no way rests on a merely arbitrary definition" (*Morgensstunden*, cited in Harrelson, *Ontological Argument*, ch. 6).

Part Two

Hegel on the Personhood of God

4

Hegel on Persons and Personhood

1. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter we take up the question of personhood; in the next two chapters we address Hegel's view of the personhood of God (*die Persönlichkeit Gottes*). Hegel's concept of personhood is, like his reconstruction of the ontological argument, dependent on his logical doctrine of the concept. Hegel takes pains to point out that his concept of the concept is not a concept in the ordinary sense that Kant appealed to in his critique of the ontological argument—to wit, the "concept" of 100 dollars.[1] Here a concept is "only a concept," nothing more. Hegel's concept is a critique, both of the ordinary sense of the term (we should abandon the "only") and of Kant's concept that is formal, empty, and subjective. Hegel's concept is not an empty thought form, but a non-formal organized whole or totality. The concept differentiates itself and is fully manifested and developed in the syllogism,[2] and its philosophical position is absolute or objective idealism.[3] The concept in nature corresponds to organic life.[4] In addition, there are also spiritual organisms, persons, families, states, and ethical life. Hegel's concept is a "logical organism," or, rather, an organized articulated totality of organic unities.[5] In Hegel's view, philosophy is a study of determinate unities.[6] He observes:

> If the logical forms of the concept were really dead, inactive, and indifferent receptacles of representations or thoughts, then, as far as the truth is concerned, our information about them would be a completely superfluous and dispensable description. In fact, however, being forms of the concept they are, on the contrary, the *living spirit of what is actual*; and what is true of the actual is only

[1] *EL* §160Z; see also §§161–5.
[2] *SL* 663–4. Hegel describes it as the copula pregnant with content.
[3] *EL* §160. [4] *EL* §161Z.
[5] Hegel's doctrine of the concept comprises the third part of the *Science of Logic*. It includes the subjective logic—dialectical analysis of the concept, Hegel's treatment of judgment and syllogism; objectivity, which includes mechanism, chemism, and teleology, and the absolute idea, the union of concept and reality.
[6] *LPR* 1. 379.

> *true in virtue of these forms, through them and in them*. Yet the truth of these forms on their very own account has never been considered and investigated until now, any more than the necessary connection between them . . . [7]

The concept has three moments or phases: universality, particularity, and singularity; taken abstractly, these are the same as identity, difference, and ground.[8] None of these terms designates discrete entities, or atomic units. Hegel calls them moments or developmental phases of a whole that coinhere with each other. Each of them is the whole that the concept is, and is posited in inseparable unity with it. Yet each moment differs from the other moments; they are organized by and related to each other only as members of the whole. Thus the concept is a totality, a unity in and through difference. This unity in and through difference cannot be understood through the abstract categories of the understanding and its "either/or"—that is, either abstract identity or abstract difference. As a concrete, articulated whole or totality, the concept is an identity of identity and difference. Both are necessary and constitutive. Without the identity, the whole disintegrates; without the difference, the whole loses its articulation and collapses into undifferentiated identity. Either way, the whole ceases to be a whole.

Hegel identifies personhood with one of the logical moments of the concept—namely, singularity (*Einzelheit*). Singularity is distinguished from abstract universality and abstract particularity. Singularity is their dialectical reconciliation and union; thus singularity is the concrete universal, the true infinite, in contrast to the abstract universal. Singularity is the final, maximally concrete, mediated phase of the concept's development. It is the action in and through which the concept gathers itself, posits itself as a whole, and comes to be for itself (*Fürsichsein*).[9]

Like his reconstruction of the ontological argument, Hegel's doctrine of personhood is explicated on the basis of the concept. However, in this case the moment of singularity undergoes important further differentiation into immediate singularity and universal singularity. As we will see, personhood for Hegel is not an atomistic conception, or a sheer unity of being-for-self only. The latter is a distortion and perversion of being-for-self. Rather personhood is a social unity in and through difference—to wit, a unity of *being-for-self* and *being-for-other*. Further personhood is not any unity of being-for-self and being-for-other, but one that is free. Freedom in turn is defined and understood as being at home with oneself in another ('bei sich im Andere zu sein'). This determinate free unity in and through difference is roughly equivalent to what Hegel means by Spirit (*Geist*) and ethical life (*Sittlichkeit*).

We have seen that Hegel's reconstruction of the ontological argument is also articulated on the basis of his doctrine of the concept as self-differentiating,

[7] *EL* §162R; emphasis in original. [8] *EL* §165R. [9] *EL* §163; *PR* §66.

self-mediating, and self-realizing. Singularity also corresponds in a special case to the ontological argument; here God is not a concept but *the* concept. The suspension and sublation of the deficient, "merely" subjective concept, is its self-realization: the concept negates its status of being merely subjective, and, through this negation of negation, sublates itself into existence, as we have seen. How this is relevant to the concept of personhood will be explored in this chapter and the next.

But first we will attend to historical background, first in Hegel's reconstruction of both philosophy and religion; second we shall examine how the question of personhood of God arose in the reception of Hegel's philosophy of religion. This topic generated a controversy that divided the Hegelian school into a left wing and a right wing, both of which pursued one-sided interpretations of Hegel's thought that abandoned Hegel's project of philosophy of religion.

2. BACKGROUND MATTERS

A. Hegel's Reconstruction of Philosophy of Religion

Hegel's reconstruction of speculative philosophy, including his philosophy of religion, is based on the logic as the fundamental, but not the only, discipline of the Hegelian system. According to Hegel, philosophy takes the content of experience in the broadest possible sense, and transforms this content from its *given* representational forms (*Vorstellungen*) into conceptual form, which, as we have seen, has for Hegel a special technical meaning. The task of philosophy is hermeneutical—that is, it must discern the meaning of human life and experience, and explicate this content according to its own immanent meaning and necessity.

Hegel affirms that religion and philosophy share an identity of content, but not an identity of form. Both aim at truth in the sense that God and God alone is the truth.[10] But the two disciplines differ in the method and treatment of the content. Religion accepts the content in the form of images, representations, and myths as divine revelation; philosophy seeks to interpret these and transform religious images and representations into the conceptual form. Hegel saw that religion of his own day had become positive—that is, its traditional historical doctrines and institutions no longer directly reflected vital human interests and could be defended only by authoritarian measures, which discredited religion even more. Consequently, religion in its traditional

[10] *EL* §1. Hegel rejects double truth theories. *LPR* 1. 130–1.

forms was on its way to becoming a fossil. Hegel singles out a type of modern theology that adopts a merely historical attitude toward religion and its content expressed in classical doctrines:

> if the cognition of religion were merely historical, we would have to compare such theologians with countinghouse clerks, who keep the ledgers and accounts of other people's wealth, a wealth that passes through their hands without their retaining any of it. . . . In philosophy and religion, however, the essential thing is that one's own spirit should recognize a . . . content, deem it worthy of cognition, and not keep itself humbly outside. . . . Truth is no empty shell, but something concrete, a fullness of content. . . . It is this fullness that modern theology has emptied out. *Our intention, however, is to regain such a fullness by means of the concept.*[11]

Hegel proposes salvaging religious truth, which was in danger of sinking into terminal stages of ossification, grasp its inner necessity and importance to human freedom, and, by reformulating it anew in contemporary language, renew it. Such reconstruction did not aim to replace faith or piety with the study of philosophy, but rather to grasp and elaborate the Christian religion as a content that is intrinsically rational and as such speaks to the needs of human freedom and existence. Hegel believed that, in such a reconstruction, the truth of the Christian religion, obscured by its traditional forms, could be clarified and formulated in contemporary language, if not placed on a more secure foundation.[12]

Hegel's *Logic* itself involves a reconstruction of traditional forms of both philosophy and religion. For example, Hegel's reconstruction of the ontological proof seeks to combat and overcome logical formalism,[13] metaphysical positivism,[14] and the abstract universal that is shared by both traditional metaphysics and Kant's critical philosophy. Hegel's distinction between the spurious and the true infinite is also relevant to this reconstruction, for it is a critique of abstract universality, the infinite separated from the finite. Similarly, Hegel's concept of personhood is a continuation of this project of overcoming of logical formalism, metaphysical positivism, and the abstract universal. Such reconstruction may involve a change in traditional forms and patterns of thought. As Walter Jaeschke points out, a *methodologically consistent production of religion from the concept*—including the doctrine of God—*cannot simply resurrect the content of religion in its traditional shape*.[15] The same is true for Hegel's revision of philosophy and traditional logic and metaphysics. Hegel's reconstruction, while conservative in aim, could require criticism of, as well as a displacement of, traditional forms of logic and metaphysics as well as

[11] *LPR* 1. 128; emphasis added. [12] *RR* 359. [13] *SL* 707–8.
[14] See Paul Redding, *Analytic Philosophy and the Return of Hegelian Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), ch. 8.
[15] *RR* 290.

religion.[16] This presupposes an acknowledgment that the traditional forms are pre-critical, have become obsolete—that is, positive, and that as obsolete they may obscure and undermine, rather than communicate, the truth content of the religion.[17]

On the philosophical side, Hegel observes that traditional metaphysics took its thought-determinations as immediate givens, valid in isolation, and free of contradiction. It not only thinks, but *dwells* within oppositions that are taken as ultimate and not subject to negation. Thus traditional metaphysics became dogmatic and one-sided. Hegel shares Kant's critique of traditional metaphysics, but objects that Kant's critique, by retaining the traditional categories of the understanding and failing to criticize them, replaced an objective dogmatism with a subjective one.[18]

Given Kant's restriction of the objective validity of the categories to finite phenomena, the ideas of reason—freedom, world, and God—became transcendent, unknowable *Jenseits*. Hegel criticizes such metaphysical dualism when he observes that an infinite opposed to the finite is itself one-sided and finite, a spurious infinite. On the theological side, theology took over the metaphysics of the understanding and its opposition of the infinite to the finite. This opposition underlies the monarchial metaphor shaping the moral–penal vision of the world. Hegel criticizes the concept of kingdom of God as the power of a stranger over a stranger.[19] It reflects a concept of law as an abstract universal before which individuals are condemned. Hegel replaces the traditional concept of kingdom with a concept of the true infinite, in which infinite and finite are not opposed but rather form a community. As will be shown, Hegel's concept of personhood is a recognitive–communitarian model.

[16] In his foreword to volume 2 of the *Logic of the Concept*, Hegel compares his task to a remodeling job "on an ancient city, solidly built, and maintained in continuous possession and occupation. Among other things one must resolve to make no use at all of much material that has hitherto been highly esteemed. . . . for the logic of the concept, a completely ready-made and solidified, one may say ossified material is ready to hand, and the task is to render this material fluid and to re-kindle the spontaneity of the concept in such dead matter" (*SL* 575).

[17] See *EL* §§26–35. Hegel does not dismiss pre-critical metaphysics as an error, claiming that it is obsolete only in relation to the history of philosophy. Its immediate belief, that there is a world and others out there, constitutes the natural attitude towards the life-world that is presupposed by all praxes, including theoretical reason and the sciences. On the other hand, metaphysics as traditionally understood corresponds to the way the understanding views the categories and objects of reason. Kant's critique of metaphysics put an end to its dogmatism, but not to the questions of metaphysical concern—God, world, freedom.

[18] *LHP* 3. 427. "This philosophy [Kant's] put an end of the metaphysic of the understanding as an objective dogmatism, but in fact it merely transformed it into a subjective dogmatism, i.e., into a consciousness in which these same finite thought-determinations of the understanding persist, and the question of what is true in and for itself has been abandoned." This criticism should be balanced against Hegel's appreciation of Kant's treatment of the types of judgment as determined by thought, to wit, the universal forms of the logical idea. Cf. *EL* §171Z.

[19] *ETW* 278.

Walter Jaeschke observes that Hegel's philosophy is both critique of and apologia for Christianity.[20] I agree and would extend this point: Hegel is both a critic of traditional metaphysics and a defender of what he takes to be true and valuable in it. The point that Jaeschke is seeking to make needs to be highlighted: to the extent that one takes a preconceived view that Hegel's philosophy must be *either* an *apologia* for Christianity *or* a critique of it, instead of being both of these, one will misinterpret Hegel's thought as ambiguous, when in fact it is not. The same is true in the case of metaphysics: Hegel is both critic and exponent. To regard him only as the latter, without also being the former, is to court misinterpretation. This complexity may be one reason why no consensus interpretation of Hegel's *Logic* or system—including his philosophy of religion—has emerged.

B. The Historical Controversy over the Personhood of God

To take up the concept of personhood, including the personhood of God, in Hegel is to court controversy. For this is one of the basic issues that divided Hegel from his critics, who charged him with pantheism, and divided his school after his death. Unfortunately, the issue is one that remains unresolved and in dispute—though with slightly less heated polemics today than in Hegel's day. Many theologians, including Pietists, took objection to Hegel's philosophy because it was *philosophy*, and because philosophy as such was perceived as abstract, technical thinking antithetical and harmful to living faith. As Walter Jaeschke points out, such controversies were rarely useful or productive, in part because:

> The standard adopted in the controversy over the Christian character of the philosophy of religion was only seldom that of a theologically considered concept of the Christian religion. It was much more frequently a prescientific, naïve understanding of what was Christian that was brought into play against Hegel's attempt to conceive it.[21]

One thing that such polemics did accomplish was the severing of immediate religious consciousness from scientific–academic theology and philosophy.

Hegel's criticism of and divergence from traditional theism and Christianity led to charges of pantheism. While some wished to tar him with the brush of Spinozism, the issue beneath the charge of pantheism was the issue of a personal God. Pantheism allegedly denied any concept of divine personhood. Hegel's logic was regarded, erroneously, as pantheism. Jaeschke explains:

[20] *RR* 357. [21] *RR* 359–60.

> The God of whom metaphysical definitions were formed from pure categories of thought was not credited with personality even when he came to be addressed by the philosophy of religion as 'absolute subjectivity'—especially since the conception of the philosophy of religion was regarded, rightly, as dependent on the logic and was therefore rejected as an inappropriate experimentation with the logical method. . . . It was the fate of Hegel's philosophy of religion that it was unable to erase the impression that the concepts it developed were intended also to satisfy the impressions of a pious heart. This made it seem unnecessary for religious consciousness to undertake critical reflection on the limits of a discourse about God that was philosophically as well as theologically scientific. . . . If Hegel's philosophy could be shown not to have succeeded in expounding the personality of God in a manner acceptable to 'living faith,' then it seemed to be refuted . . . from within. . . . Once the criterion of the 'Christian character' was tailored in this way to the exalted, divinely inspired heart . . . it was hardly surprising that Hegel's philosophy was found wanting.[22]

The issue of the personhood of God also divided the Hegelian school itself, although this division was slow to emerge, but by the early 1840s the division became clear. To be sure, there were always differences of interpretation within the school, because of the complexity of the interpretative task. Hegel's position was that philosophy and religion have the same content, but in different form. The concurrence of Christianity with the speculative logical form involves dual assessments of Hegel's revisions of both traditional metaphysics and philosophy, on the one hand, and revisions of traditional theology, on the other. Hegel claims a concurrence between the two that includes a difference in form, concept, and representation. The deeper issue in the school's disagreements is whether the representational content of the philosophy of religion can be identified with its conceptual form. The Hegelian school broke up when the differing interpretations present within it could no longer be understood as particular instances of a single universal principle (after 1839).[23] At the center of this rupture were two issues: the personhood of God and the relation of idea to history.[24]

[22] *RR* 363–4. Such early attacks on Hegel's philosophy of religion from those who preferred the Christian mythos to philosophical theology prefigure later debates between scholars, including philosophers, who debate whether Hegel and Hegelian thought is Christian and metaphysical, in view of his criticism of and departure from Christian orthodoxy and pre-critical metaphysics. For many, any inquiry into the being of God is by definition pre-critical, an inquiry, as Hegel himself noted, into "a long-refuted error deserving no further attention" (*LPR* 1. 86, 163). See also Frederick Beiser, *Hegel* (New York: Routledge, 2006); "Dark Days: Anglophone Scholarship since the 1960s," in Espen Hammer (ed.), *German Idealism: Contemporary Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 70–90; 'The Puzzline Hegel Renaissance," in F. C. Beiser (ed.), *Cambridge Companion to Hegel and Nineteenth-Century Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 1–14. This is the view that Hegel sets out to combat in his *Logic* and *Philosophy of Religion*. Cf. Robert Williams, *Tragedy Recognition and the Death of God: Studies in Hegel and Nietzsche* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 16–21.

[23] *RR* 356–7.

[24] The latter issue remains beyond our present task.

The break-up of the Hegelian school into left-Hegelian and right-Hegelian wings signaled the collapse of the Hegelian center, and the failure of the Hegelian conception of the philosophy of religion. The left-Hegelians grasped the logic primarily as a method, read the speculative theology out of the logic by interpreting Hegel's theology as metaphors or undigested elements of religious representation, and produced what Walter Jaeschke calls an anthropological reduction of religion.[25] For the left-Hegelians, Hegel's concrete universal extends only as far as anthropology, or objective spirit, a theory of ethical life and politics, and, if pushed, it might possibly extend to a non-metaphysical anthropological view of religion as a postulate of morality (Kant). Hegel concedes that the Kantian view of religion as a postulate of morality is the highest standpoint within reflective philosophy, one that excludes any adequate understanding of religion because religion is treated as instrumental to some other, more fundamental, human interest. On the contrary, for Hegel, religion is the most fundamental human interest, because it is concerned with the totality of that which is intrinsically valuable—which includes freedom.[26]

In contrast, the right-Hegelians sought to defend Hegel against the charges of pantheism that conceives of God as dialectical process but not as living personhood. They maintained Hegel's continuity with traditional metaphysical theism by affirming the abstract otherworldly transcendence of a personal God. This claim separates God from the world in abstract transcendence. The intent was to interpret Hegel as approximating traditional Christian theology that conceived God as personal, and that separated God as a cosmic monarch from the world. But the right-Hegelians, in adopting such positions, ran into difficulty with the Hegelian school, which emphasized Hegel's departure from abstract transcendence and the abstract universal. "The call to conceive God as self-conscious spirit existing prior to and outside the world invited the objection that 'spirit' was then only an empty word of which nothing definite could be thought."[27] Such a defense of divine personhood is essentially tied to and bound up with traditional views that Hegel explicitly rejected—that is, the abstract universal and abstract transcendence, when he wrote that "in the very act of keeping the infinite pure and aloof from the finite, the infinite is only made finite."[28] Walter Jaeschke observes:

> In the eyes of contemporary critics, the right Hegelian attempt to conceive God as absolute personality or absolute subjectivity in the sense of the logical idea, and at the same time to conceive God as the highest individual, simply plunged . . . the well-ordered Hegelian system into inconsistencies and contradictions.[29]

[25] *RR* 352. [26] *LPR* 1. 288–307. [27] *RR* 369.
[28] *SL* 137. [29] *RR* 372.

Given the importance of Hegel's logical and theological critique of the abstract universal, the right-Hegelian view collapsed as an interpretation of Hegel's thought, both philosophical and theological.

As Jaeschke points out, neither of these options, whether taken singly or together, does justice to the complexity of Hegel's thought. Both the left-Hegelian and the right-Hegelian positions abandon Hegel's position in the logic and philosophy of religion. The right-Hegelian position regards truth as given in advance, and its attitude toward philosophy depends on whether it is deemed compatible with this pre-given truth. The left-Hegelian position surrenders the traditional understanding of religion, unmasking its theology as anthropology. This too abandons Hegel, who rejected a merely secular anthropological alternative. What both left and right positions have in common is the claim—opposite to Hegel's—of the non-identity of religion and philosophy. Both give up Hegel's project of systematic philosophy, which includes and culminates in the philosophy of religion. Neither adheres to Hegel's own view. However, it is also the case that these are not the only conceivable or possible interpretations.

Walter Jaeschke observes that "Hegel's students were long convinced that only his philosophy of religion was the fortunate possessor of the constitutive condition for meaningful talk of the personality of God, namely, the Trinitarian conception of God."[30] One student, Karl Ludwig Michelet, distinguished Hegel's position from both left- and right-Hegelian positions and attacks.[31] Michelet defended the Hegel's theses concerning the identity in difference of philosophy and religion, and Hegel's combination of divine personhood with a rejection of the abstract transcendence and divine personhood asserted by right-Hegelians.

C. Terminological Issues

There is no monograph on Hegel's theory of personhood. Indeed, there is not even any consensus concerning how to translate Hegel's term *Persönlichkeit.* Recent translations render it as "personality," but this is misleading, given the dominance of modern social sciences, where personality is a quasi-empirical, atomistic concept distant from Hegel's *Logic*, psychology, and philosophy of spirit. I have chosen to render *Persönlichkeit* as personhood, because the latter term preserves the apparent abstract character of the former, and because, as Michelet and Hegel expound it, it is both an individual and a relational, social–communal term. Person, at least in English, corresponds to the Latin

[30] *RR* 369. [31] *PG.*

Individuum and Greek "atom," which, as far as Hegel is concerned, are abstract and dialectical.

This linguistically underscores important points established by Michelet: that to ascribe personhood to God does not mean that God is simply *a* person and does not necessarily render God finite, and that the right-Hegelians who conceived God as abstract transcendent person missed Hegel's point and ruined the Hegelian system. On the other hand, the left-Hegelians, were not much better, for, in reading God out of the *Logic* and system and reducing religion to anthropology, they failed to notice that in his *Logic* and *Philosophy of Religion* Hegel is serious about personhood in his doctrine of the concept, including the personhood of God—that is, he rejected a merely anthropological, secular interpretation of spirit. On these topics, not only is there no consensus interpretation of Hegel's thought; Hegel scholarship has not sufficiently recognized, much less made any significant advance, beyond Michelet's center Hegelian position.

3. A CENTER HEGELIAN POSITION: K. L. MICHELET

In what follows, I shall briefly examine Michelet's view of the personhood of God, and then turn to a further, closer examination of Hegel's treatment of personhood in his *Logic* and *Philosophy of Right*. Michelet's title captures his thesis: *Lectures on the Personhood of God and the Immortality of the Soul, or the Eternal Personhood of Spirit*. According to Michelet the two problems of the personhood of God and immortality of the soul are not merely substantially akin and related, they are "absolutely identical"; the one is only a reflection of the other.[32] We shall focus on the former instead of the latter, but it must be noted that Michelet understands them to be dialectically mutually implicating. Michelet reflects Hegel's claim that the philosophy of religion differs from natural theology and traditional metaphysics that considered God in abstraction from the world—that is, as separate from the world in abstract transcendence. Instead the philosophy of religion considers the doctrine of God as included in and part of the doctrine of religion, since it is in religion that the abstract separation of the highest being from the world is overcome and that the God-relation is actual.

Assuming Hegel's conception of religion, Michelet explains that, as a correlation between God and community, religion is constituted by an opposition between the eternal or infinite spirit, on the one side, and the human or finite spirit, on the other side. Within this opposition, *personhood seems to*

[32] *PG* 8.

imply finitude; to wit, to be a person is to be one person among others, where opposition and struggle are always possible, owing to different and partial perspectives and to competing interests and agendas. However, Michelet insists that we cannot ascribe such partial, personal perspectives to God. So it seems an error to ascribe personhood to God because that makes God finite, anthropomorphic. Conversely, it seems an error to ascribe immortality to a finite mortal spirit. These questions must be addressed.

According to Michelet, to inquire into the personhood of God is to inquire how God becomes finite to reveal and make himself present. Similarly, the inquiry into immortality is to inquire how finite humans are assumed into the eternal realm of spirit. Each question is thus one half of a whole that is essentially connected to the other half. What must be shown is how these opposite predicates are exchanged: how a transcendent God becomes immanent and personal, and how finite, mortal humans become immortal. The descent of God into human personhood (incarnation) is the condition of possibility of human spirit becoming eternal.[33] Michelet believes that his task is nothing less than an inquiry into "the fundamental truth of Christianity," the incarnation of God and the rebirth of human beings into eternal life. For Michelet, the answer to the question of the personhood of God is to be found in incarnation.[34]

Incarnation also involves triunity. Triunity signifies divine personhood, but not that God is *a* person. God is not an individual Thou in opposition or contrast to another individual Thou; rather God is a universal subject.[35] Michelet does not clarify what this means. But he does claim that triunity breaks down the atomistic understanding of persons and personhood. The doctrine of triunity contradicts the atomistic, merely individualistic personhood of God as it is understood both by traditional theism and by right-Hegelians—that is, as abstract unity and transcendence, the cosmic monarch, and so on, as being-for-self only.[36]

Further, if finite spirit remains external to the infinite as in traditional theism, then there is no incarnation and the infinite is not personal. Moreover, because the absolute, as impersonal, excludes and is external to the finite, then the latter is likewise not immortal. The absolute *Persönlichkeit Gottes* consists

[33] *PG* 10. [34] *PG* 11.

[35] This concept is pantheistic, the universal subject in all finite subjects. It resembles a Fichteanized Spinozism of the All-One doctrine, which is an abstract universal and identity. Michelet misses the "origin of the logical subject" in the dialectic of determinate being, something and other. See Ch. 5, Sects 2–3.

[36] *PG* 12. Triunity contradicts the separation of God from world, the spurious infinite. But it is not clear from Michelet how this anti-dualism sublates the issue of atomism in a higher determinate unity. He would probably insist that discreteness and continuity, individual and community, are dialectical concepts. But he offers no plausible account of the *determinate unity* resulting from their dialectic, e.g., like Hegel's concept of the We and/or Spirit. See Ch. 5, nn. 99, 100, 105.

in God's eternally becoming finite, eternally becoming human. The human being insofar as he is able to exhibit the eternal personhood of God in God's earthly existence, and thus to be the image of God, is raised into eternity. The immortality of the soul is therefore God's continuously coming to be personal, and, with the eternal personhood of God in incarnation, an immortal aspect of the individual has been discovered.[37]

Spirit is the substance common to the humans and divinity, in which their opposition and isolation disappears. Spirit is the doctrine of divine–human community. Simply put, God becomes personal by becoming incarnate, and this is the condition not only of reconciliation, but of human beings becoming immortal and being raised into divine personhood and community. Thus the community appears as an extension of incarnation.

In explaining the concept of personhood, Michelet contrasts two terms, individuality (*Individuum*) and personhood (*Persönlichkeit*). He claims *Individuum* is the Latin translation of the Greek "atom." The atom is an indivisible unit that repels every other from itself, and likewise is excluded by others. Thus "atomism" implies discontinuity, irreducible and unbridgeable discreteness (*Discretum*); so understood, atomism implies a merely externally related aggregate. But, for Michelet, this term atomism also has ethical significance—namely. it is connected with self-seeking, negative relations towards others; for example, atomism implies egoism, "*selbstsucht gegen Andere*."[38] Self-consciousness, acting out of its narrow self-seeking in opposition to others, seeks to realize its own ends at the expense of others, and to destroy the ends of the other and indeed the other himself. This narrow self-seeking is overcome only in and through love; in love the self passes over into another, and in union with the other makes compromises with and sacrifices for the other, and posits itself in union with the other. In love the negative attitude toward the other simply as the limit of the self is sublated into a higher mutually mediated union.

The opposite term to discreteness is *Continuität*, or "continuity." According to Michelet, continuity involves the melting of the brittleness and hardness that repels each atom from every other. The melting metaphor is an expression for the sun of infinite spirit that melts the hardness/exclusiveness of finitude and brings forth the noble metal of love over finite spirit.[39] The latter

[37] *PG* 15. Michelet's claims about an immortal aspect of the individual appear to render incarnation and mediation superfluous, and exceed what Hegel actually claims. See p. 166 n. 58.

[38] *PG* 151.

[39] In his later book, *Das System der Philosophie als Exacter Wissenschaft* (Berlin: Nicolai, 1876–81), Michelet connects atomism and discreteness with the logical category of repulsion, wherein the one repells itself from itself and becomes a many. Although he does not explicitly assert this, continuity is connected with the opposing force of attraction whereby the many become one. The problem with Michelet's appeal to repulsion and attraction is their logical impoverishment: these are categories of nature, not categories of freedom or ethical life. Thus

experiences that the boundaries of his narrow selfhood dissolve in friendship and that his self-identity is expanded to include another. Although Michelet is thinking in terms of the logical categories of repulsion and attraction, and does not mention Hegel's concept of recognition, his appeal to friendship as an example of an enlarged mentality liberated from its narrow self-seeking agrees in part with Hegel's account of recognition, which is supposed to result in an I that is a We, the concept of spirit (*Geist*). Of course, while friendship includes attraction, it is more determinate than "mere attraction," precisely because it presupposes freedom and involves mutuality and reciprocity. These structures and movements are not expressed in Michelet's imagery. Michelet makes a further important claim, that the continuity of finite spirits is the influence posited in them by infinite spirit. The infinite is not only the absolute ideality of all finite natural differences. God is the absolute continuity—the tie that binds finite spirits, in which all their particular differences are made fluid.[40]

As the power of attraction, the love that is the concrescence of finite spirits, God is the substance of individual self-consciousness. Michelet says that we understand this more fundamentally when we affirm that God is the tie that binds spirits together, when all are one in spirit and strive together towards the same end/purpose. More recently, we have called this identity, this binding tie, *Persönlichkeit.*[41] It should be noted that. in Michelet's use of the term, *Persönlichkeit is not simply "person," or "personality," but rather the continuity or relation of persons.* This implies that not only are the *relata* (that is, persons) real, but also that relations are real and affect their *relata*. And this surely is a central Hegelian and Aristotelian claim and insight.[42] *Persönlichkeit* appears as the binding tie, the mediating term of relation, not a person but rather the connecting link between persons. This suggests it is a universal consciousness, but as far as I know Michelet does not designate it as a "we."[43]

Michelet elaborates on the ethical–spiritual significance of love: the spirit who regards the other not as a limit but rather as the condition and mediator of his freedom, and who wills the freedom of all, has left behind the standpoint of finitude and egoism. Michelet also calls this transformation *Persönlichkeit*—that is, the acquiring of an expanded self-consciousness and self-identity. Further, through *Personlichkeit* the human being takes flight into infinity. This flight means a stripping-away of everything that binds human beings to nature and raises them to the sphere of pure spirituality that is common to humans and the divine being.[44] *Personlichkeit* is the bridge over which

they do not provide adequate conceptual grounding or justification for Michelet's topic, which is *Persönlichkeit*. Sensing this mismatch, Michelet resorts to poetic and metaphorical language; he is either unaware of or ignores Hegel's logic of the Concept and concept of recognition.

[40] *PG* 147. [41] *PG* 152.

[42] See Robert Williams, "Aristotle, Hegel and Nietzsche on Friendship," in *Tragedy, Recognition and the Death of God*.

[43] See Sects 6 and 7. [44] *PG* 152.

discrete, atomistic, spiritless human selves actually become spirit—that is, are led to community with others—the family, civil society, and the state, as well as with infinite spirit. *Persönlichkeit* is the middle term, the "between" common to both relata.

However, while family and nation are examples of *Persönlichkeit*, they remain finite. *Persönlichkeit* in this finite sense cannot be ascribed to God. God is not one or the other of these aspects of finite *Persönlichkeit*. God is the *totality* of spiritual being, in which discrete yet ethical actions of the spiritual sphere are sublated and concresce in harmony. Moreover, the concept of *Persönlichkeit* undergoes modification in the finite–infinite relation.

Michelet distinguishes finite personhood from infinite personhood.[45] If "person" means a free process of objectivation of inner determinations of spirit, and the unfolding of these in an intelligible realm, God is indeed person. For, as the ideality and fluidity of all finite distinctions, the true infinite spirit is the least affected by any sort of hindrance to his actualization. But "God is not *this* person in opposition to *another* person . . . "[46] However, just as individual *Persönlichkeit* is the series of its deeds and thoughts, so also is the infinite spirit the entire compass of his works; [God is] therefore, the enduring constantly self-identical *personhood* that, despite the multiplicity of its *Gestalten*, proceeds out of the whole [process of] creation. This *personhood* is, to be sure, not a particular, but rather the universal *personhood*, not existing separately or apart from particular persons, but present in each individuality, the blossoming of its higher *personhood*. What each individual produces that possesses enduring value, he accomplishes only by virtue of the indwelling of this divine *personhood* in him. In yet another formulation, Michelet makes his point in this way: God is not an individual/singular person, that can say "I" to a "Thou"; rather God is, as Novalis says, the great (universal) I in which all particular "I's" come to know their identity.[47]

However, if God were only this universal person, God would not be an actual person, but an abstract universal; if so, this view would merit the criticisms leveled at philosophy and Spinoza's pantheism. In short, the universal person would remain abstract, if not an empty abstraction; but God is living and active. So God can be understood neither as a mere particularity nor as a mere empty abstract universality; the one is just as lacking in actuality as the other. God is the eternal activity, the living movement into one another of these two aspects, the process of the true universal that preserves itself eternally as the totality of its moments. Thus Michelet writes:

> Universality and *Einzelheit*/singularity are inseparable moments of divine *Personhood*. The divine is the universal manifesting itself in individual persons, or, regarded from another perspective, that in the particular individuality which

[45] *PG* 156–7. [46] *PG* 157. [47] *PG* 160.

> corresponds to this universality. God is the idea that continuously realizes itself and in this realization finds a *Dasein* adequate to Godself. To be sure, the individuals are not perfect . . . but this imperfection does not count as an authentic, essential existence. Only that in the individual which counts . . . is that through which it manifests the divine Idea. This aspect of human personhood is the eternal in human being, because the latter harmonizes with its own concept. God is therefore the eternal personhood of humans—all humans—the true concept of personhood that appears to a greater or lesser degree in all, and in individuals in which it realizes itself, it remains identical with itself, the universal eternal idea. Thus *God is the absolute Persönlichkeit that continuously personifies itself in its individuals and therefore cannot be exhausted by any one, nor can it appear in an adequate way in any sensible this.*[48]

This *Dasein* adequate to God is neither abstract universality nor mere individuality, but rather community/totality.

Again Michelet emphasizes that, although God is personal, this does not mean that God is *a* person.[49] Traditional theism, which asserts that God is a person, and pantheism, which denies that God is a person or even personal, are both overturned by the basic dogma of Christianity, the trinity. For in the latter there are at least three persons—father, son, and spirit—that coalesce in one being. Michelet indicates that trinity presupposes incarnation, which is its actualization—the historical event in which the *Persönlichkeit Gottes* is revealed and made apparent. Christology in its correct philosophical interpretation is the condition of actualization of the *Persönlichkeit Gottes*.[50] Michelet claims that incarnation and christology manifest the *Persönlichkeit Gottes*; however, for Michelet this does not mean that God *is* personal or personhood. Rather it means that God first *acquires* personhood in incarnation. This is puzzling; does it mean that, apart from incarnation, there would be no divine personhood? That apart from incarnation God would be abstract impersonal substance?

Moreover, for Hegel the claim of divine personhood presupposes immanent distinctions in God—the immanent or ontological trinity—which is manifest in incarnation.[51] Michelet does not acknowledge or develop this point. He does not regard trinity as a condition or presupposition of incarnation and christology; instead, for Michelet the point is rather that in incarnation a nonpersonal God (abstract substance?) acquires personhood. This appears to follow suggestions in Hegel's early philosophy of religion presented in the 1807 *Phenomenology of Spirit*, but not at all Hegel's argument in the Berlin

[48] *PG* 160. Does this exclude the concept of incarnation? Michelet does not address this question, but he does affirm incarnation as central to his conception of personhood, which appears to mean something like community and relation.

[49] *PG* 162. [50] *PG* 164.

[51] Cf. *PhS* §772. Here Hegel characterizes the immanent trinitarian relation between Father and Eternal Son as a loving recognition.

Philosophy of Religion lectures. Conversely, humans by becoming ethical subjects (beyond atomistic egoism) achieve a higher immortal selfhood. Michelet reduces a complex claim in metaphysics and in Christian theology to an apologetic slogan: God becomes human so that humans may become immortal.[52] Recall that, according to Michelet, the doctrine of the personhood of God is supposed to be identical in content to the doctrine of immortality of the soul. As it stands, this claim is untenable because its simple symmetry that equates the personhood of God with the immortality of the human soul fundamentally distorts Hegel's view, and rather appears to approximate a left-Hegelian, Feuerbachian reduction of theology to anthropology.

Michelet restates his position in somewhat closer agreement with Hegel when he writes: *If God first attains self-consciousness in humans, the human being is nevertheless not the one who posits this Persönlichkeit Gottes, because the human being itself is posited by the divine idea.*[53] Michelet later returns to these issues, and criticizes his earlier formulations as reductive. They are reductive in a double sense: they reduce and lose both God and the human. Here is how he formulates the double loss:

> If it is true that, on the one hand, God only comes to *Persönlichkeit* in humans, and on the other hand, the human being enjoys eternal life only insofar as he is immersed in the divine *Persönlichkeit*, we seem to have come to a double negation [that loses both God and the human] and there is no way out of the impasse to an affirmative result. The first negation is that we appear to lose God in the totality of the human species . . . or reduce God to the spirit of humanity.[54]

The last sentence is the one-sided Feuerbach position that entails a reductive interpretation of divine incarnation: God reduces godself to the human being. But this reading overlooks the point that the transition from abstract universal and substance to singularity, the *Dieses*, is a *gain* for abstract universality that transforms it into concrete universality—to wit, the Singularity (*Einzelheit*) of

[52] Eberhard Jüngel, after lavishing praise on Hegel's philosophy of religion as "a high water mark of the first order in the history of theology in that the theology of the cross [the death of God] and the doctrine of trinity mutually encourage and establish each other," raises the question whether it does not in the end "result in a restitution of the old doctrine that God became a man so that man might be deified" (Eberhard Jüngel, *God as Mystery of the World*, trans. Darrel Guder (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmanns, 1983), 94). Michelet appears to confirm Jüngel's suspicion about the proper interpretation of Hegel—namely, that Hegel's view results in the worst of both possibilities: the personhood of God boils down to the reduction of theology to anthropology, and the immortality of the soul boils up to human self-apotheosis as divine. Common to both misinterpretations is the assumption of the abstract concept of identity, which eliminates the difference, and reduces divine–human community to simple divine–human identity. This reading is a caricature that ignores Hegel's major contribution to modern philosophy and theology—namely, the concept of concrete determinate universality and the corresponding concept of community as a unity in and through difference. On this crucial point, cf. *EL* §§118, 121; *LProofs*, 126.

[53] *PG* 171. [54] *PG* 223.

the concept. Michelet continues: "But if we ask what is that in which we lose God, it turns out to be 'that being which in order to know its true reality and substance must in turn lose itself in God.' This is the second negation."[55] With the concept of the *Persönlichkeit Gottes*, Michelet apparently rejects the reduction of the divine to the human and the corresponding apotheosis of humans as divine, and rather intends to conceive a divine–human community, a unity in and through difference. This requires overcoming the abstract either/or of abstract identity, and the assumption that infinite and finite are mutually exclusive and separate. For, in such an abstract, one-sided view, God and humans are real and true in their state of isolation and separation from each other. If that is admitted, then either no community between them is possible, or any relation between such separate beings can be only their mutual self-diminution, impairment, and self-loss, or the subjection of one to the other. Clearly this would be a negative dialectic that distorts and subverts the fundamentally affirmative doctrines concerning relations that Michelet wishes to defend.

Michelet believes that the erroneous negative dialectic can be overcome by deconstructing it as follows: by showing that every proposition of reason has a double sense—to wit, it is itself and its opposite. (This is good Hegelian doctrine: the concept is both itself and its opposite term.) Thus he proposes a second reading that corrects the negative and reductive tendencies of the first.

> Since in incarnation God goes outside of godself in order to lose godself in a being, which, in order to lay hold of God as its innermost being, must lose itself, so God loses godself in the [human] losing of itself in God, i.e., God finds godself again [in other]. Herein lies the actualization of God, to wit, because this "loss" occurs in that being, the other of God, in which God is supposed to manifest godself. But this other, the negative of God—stands self-negated, i.e., self-sublated. Since the human sublates itself through the appearance of God in the human and since the human by sublating itself shows itself to be the inessential, God, on the other hand, endures and prevails as the sole affirmative and the essential.[56]

Such cumbersome formulations tend to confirm Hegel's oft-reiterated claim that speculative truth cannot be adequately expressed in the usual propositional forms. Hegel put the point concerning the self-sublation of the finite more clearly in his *Philosophy of Religion* lectures:

> Because the finite is . . . not true in itself but is rather the contradiction that sublates itself, for *that* reason the truth of the finite is this affirmative element that is called the infinite . . . the [finite] point of departure sublates itself; there is a mediation that sublates itself, a mediation through the sublation of mediation.

[55] *PG* 223. [56] *PG* 224.

> The infinite does not constitute merely one aspect. For the understanding there are, in the mediation, two actual, independent beings: on this side there is a world and over yonder there is God, and the knowledge of the world is the foundation of the being of God. But through our treatment the world is relinquished as a genuine being; it is not regarded as something permanent on this side. The sole import of this procedure is that the infinite alone is; the finite has no genuine being, whereas God alone has genuine being.[57]

Michelet contrasts the finite and the infinite as the inessential and essential (respectively). Hegel draws the contrast thus: the finite is a self-contradictory unstable synthesis of being and nothing, and for this reason it has no genuine being. It is ontologically null and indigent; hence any affirmative element in it, indeed its very existence, manifests its *dependence* on the infinite. Religion acknowledges the nullity and indigence of finitude; religious praxis is the self-sublation of finitude, wherein it withdraws into its ground and is founded and validated by its other. God, on the other hand, *resolves* the contradiction in which finitude *perishes*, and thus is genuine being. Michelet's formulation has become more nearly congruent with Hegel's. However, this means that Michelet has dialectically qualified his initial assertion that the personhood of God and the immortality of the soul are identical in meaning. The personhood of God is no longer, as Michelet originally asserted, simply equivalent to the immortality of the soul, but rather its condition. Michelet has moved closer to Hegel's concept of the true infinite, which asserts the inclusive unity of finite in the infinite while preserving their difference in a way that avoids dualism: God is a unity in and through difference—that is, spirit in its community.[58]

Michelet emphasizes the close connection between divine love and the personhood of God. He speaks of the experience of love as implying a self-transformation; *Persönlichkeit* names this self-transformation. Anyone in whom the God-consciousness can arise, must know himself to be animated and moved by the spirit of divine love, must discover God in the least of his fellow human beings, and with this love embrace the entire human species. Individuals are not always narrowly self-seeking, for every human being includes a general Thou, the universal Thou in himself, and knows himself to be identical with the Thou, as this great Thou is in and for itself the foundation of every ego. If this knowledge of the unity of persons is called

[57] *LPR* 1. 424.

[58] As for the immortality issue, Hegel's position may be discerned from the following: "It is only in absolute mediation that humankind gains value, but a value that is infinite. This subjectivity is truly infinite in and for itself, but human being is *infinite only through this mediation*, *not immediately*. Thus it is *capable* of having an infinite value, and this capacity or possibility is its positive, absolute defining, character. This character is the reason why the immortality of the soul becomes a specific doctrine of the Christian religion . . . " (*LPR* 3. 138). Immortality is thus a christological–soteriological postulate: "an infinite eternal vocation to be a citizen of the Kingdom of God" (*LPR* 3. 138).

love, it is entirely correct as Spinoza says, not only that the human being senses an intellectual love of God, but also that this intellectual human love for God is in turn the intellectual love of God for himself, the love with which he loves himself inclusively in humans.[59] To be sure, Spinoza asserts both the intellectual love of God and that God is abstract necessary substance. It remains unclear how these assertions can be reconciled. However, Michelet offers his own gloss on Spinoza's intellectual love of God that supplements it both with the personhood of God and with a reference to the doctrine to the trinity:

> For the universal Thou, which comes to consciousness in humans, loves not the particular I in every human, but the universal being become actual in humans, the son of God who is born in the human heart. *This intellectual love of God is therefore the love of the father for the son, and this eternal vision of the universal in the particular is the eternal Persönlichkeit of spirit*, that remains the same in every individual . . .[60]

This formulation leaves vague the extent of Michelet's appreciation and expression of the immanent distinctions in the Hegelian concept and in the Christian Trinitarian doctrine of God. Nevertheless, it is clear that Michelet's discussion of personhood is informed in some measure by Hegel's *Logic*. For example, his distinctions between discreteness and continuity, atomism and community, are informed by and have as their deep structures Hegel's discussion of repulsion and attraction and dialectical treatment of the one and the many. These categories are found in the logic of being and thus belong to the objective logic. However, Michelet's choice of such categories is problematic because his topic, *Personlichkeit,* involves freedom, which is more logically concrete and determinate than the objective logic categories of repulsion and attraction on which Michelet bases his account. Michelet neglects the transitions from necessity to freedom, from substance to subject, and from nature to spirit in the logic of the concept.

Nevertheless, Michelet's reference to the *Logic* for a discussion of finite and infinite personhood makes evident that Hegel and the Hegelian school considered the topic of personhood to be important and that the *Logic* is an important source for understanding its deep structure—to wit, the category of "the one" is not restricted to atomism because the one dialectically implies "the other,' and "a many."[61] Michelet demonstrated the relevance of this dialectic in his discussion of discreteness and continuity and to the general question of person and personhood. Those who believe that personhood is a mere

[59] *PG* 262. [60] *PG* 262.

[61] We take up this issue in Ch. 5, Sect. 3. If anything, Michelet understates Hegel's position in the dialectic of the "something" and "other" and fails to see that it culminates in a determinate totality or unity-in-difference. In short, Michelet does not grasp adequately Hegel's philosophical trinitarianism. This leads him to undervalue and underemphasize Hegel's theological trinitarianism.

metaphor or a *Vorstellung* rather than a *Begriff* and thus a dispensable issue undeserving of serious consideration as far as the *Logic* is concerned, should ponder, as we shall, what the meaning of Hegel's *Logic of the Concept* is, Michelet's interpretation of it, and ask whether the left-Hegelian or the right-Hegelian interpretations are as faithful or successful in rendering Hegel's systematic thought.

As we will see, subjectivity cannot be simply identified with personhood, because it is only the abstract possibility of personhood. This suggests that personhood is a higher, more concrete, determinate shape of "subjectivity"—namely the singularity (*Einzelheit*) of the concept. This term is mistranslated as "individuality," because individuality (*Besonderheit*) is a term opposed to abstract universality, and as such itself requires dialectical mediation of its opposition. *Einzelheit* is better translated as singularity. Singularity is the concrete determinate universal; it is the universal that is reciprocally mediated and thus determinate and concretely universal. The singularity of the concept corresponds to the category of ground, from which abstract universality and individuality are abstractions. Singularity is the final phase of the dialectical development of the concept, where the concept comes to be for itself, returns to self out of and enriched by its other—for example, an I that is a We. It is Hegel's logical critique of and "communitarian" alternative to the philosophy of the subject.[62]

Hegel's view of personhood culminates in the absolute idea that, on the one hand, is the result of the entire logical–categorical development, and, on the other hand, because it overgrasps that development such that any apparent alternative to it is only an exemplification of it, is the true beginning and foundation of the *Logic* as objective thought or absolute idealism. If the *Logic* provides the deep structure of personhood, it is the philosophy of religion, the concluding discipline of the *Philosophy of Spirit*, that fills in the account of absolute spirit as personhood. We turn our attention to Hegel's concepts of person, personhood, and spirit.

4. HEGEL ON PERSON AND PERSONHOOD

The thesis that we will explore in the rest of this book is as follows: Hegel's doctrine of the concept is the important final third book of *Logic*. The concept's significance is not limited to the ontological proof as objective idealism and holism; the concept also frames and elaborates Hegel's concept

[62] On the translation issues of *Einzelheit*, see the translators' discussion in *EL*, p. xix. On the philosophical issues, see *EL* §§160–5, Sects 5–7, and Ch. 5, Sect. 3, on the logical origin of the subject in the dialectic of determinate being—the one and the other.

of person and his doctrine of personhood, including the personhood of God. Just as Hegel's reconstruction of the ontological argument seeks to combat and overcome logical formalism,[63] his logical concept of personhood is a continuation and extension of his overcoming of formalism, metaphysical positivism, and the abstract universal. That is why Hegel's concept of person and personhood are both linked to the third, affirmative dialectical moment of the concept that overcomes the opposition of the abstract universal and abstract particularity—namely, its moment of singularity (*Einzelheit*), that is, concrete universality and holism.

I shall begin with a consideration of some texts in which Hegel lays out his theory of person and personhood. I will identify the relevant discussions in the logic of the concept that Hegel draws upon in his account of personhood. This will necessarily be more of an outline of Hegel's account rather than an exhaustive treatment or monograph on the *Logic* and/or *Philosophy of Religion*. I shall begin with Hegel's discussion in the *Philosophy of Right*, which itself is based on the logic of the concept, a triadic whole whose moments are universality, particularity (*Besonderheit*), and singularity (*Einzelheit*). These moments correspond to the categories of Identity, Difference, and Ground.[64]

Hegel writes concerning the person as follows:

> The highest achievement of a human being is to be a person; yet in spite of this, the simple abstraction 'person' has something contemptuous about it, even as an expression. The person is essentially different from the *subject*, for the subject is only the *possibility* of personhood, since any living thing whatever is a subject. A person is therefore a subject conscious of this subjectivity, for as a person, I am completely for myself: the person is this individuality of freedom in pure being-for-itself. As this person I know myself as free in myself, and I can abstract from everything . . . And yet as this person I am something wholly determinate: I am of such an age, of such a height, in this room, and whatever other particularities I happen to be. *Personhood is thus both sublime and wholly ordinary.*[65]

Personhood, unlike subjectivity, is not a given, it is an achievement. Thus "person" and personhood are different from the subject; the subject is only the possibility of personhood. A person is a subject conscious of this particular subjectivity. As a person I am for myself, and, in my free self-relation, I am pure being-for-self (*Fürsichsein*), independent of everything else. I know that I am free, and am capable of abstracting from everything, including my own life. This is the infinite pole of personhood, its sublime aspect. Yet, as *this* person, I am also something wholly determinate, of a specific age, gender, ethnicity, and whatever other particularities and idiosyncrasies I happen to have and have been given to me. In this determinacy I am finite, dependent. Yet, however dependent I may be, I am not simply or totally limited by what is

[63] *SL* 707–8. [64] *EL* §§160–6. [65] *PR* §35Z; emphasis added.

given; I am capable of abstracting from any determinacies in which I find myself. Personhood is thus a di-polar concept, both infinite (free, independent) and finite (dependent), both sublime and wholly ordinary. Indeed, personhood exists on a continuum from the wholly ordinary to the sublime.

Hegel notes that, at the lower end of the continuum, the term "person" has something contemptuous about it; indeed, it is a term of contempt. He refers to the Roman Emperor, the "lord and master of the universe" who ruled with absolute power and unilaterally subjected all others to him. Such absolute rule not only makes all others conscious of their powerlessness; it also corrupts if not destroys the ties that bind the others. They experience the empire as the destruction of ethical life and the free public sphere; to be recognized by the one (emperor) is experienced as a loss of actuality and freedom.[66] Absolute power not only subjugates all others to itself; it transforms recognition and legal status of persons into conditions of alienation from others and from oneself. It reduces persons to mere property-owners, an abstract mine, reducing them to a mere external aggregate of abstract, dependent "mines." To describe an individual as a "person" in the Roman cultural–historical context is an expression of contempt.[67]

There is another, higher sense of person and personhood; to elaborate it requires ontological analysis. Hegel tells us:

> Personhood contains this unity of the infinite and the utterly finite, of the determinate boundary and the completely unbounded. The supreme achievement of the person is to support this contradiction, which nothing in the natural realm contains or could endure.[68]

Personhood supports, endures, and holds together the contradiction of its sublime infinitude and ordinary finitude. In his 1817–18 *Lectures on Natural Right* Hegel put the point as follows:

> Personhood implies that—determined as I am on all sides in this absolute finitude, this pure and absolute self-relation,—I am within myself infinite and universal. On the other hand, personhood is also finite, something determined on all sides. Finitude constitutes the immediate being of the individual, but in this finitude I am myself, I am self-contained, pure self-relation. I can reject all these other elements that impinge on me. I am dependent on all sides, yet I am also my own. I am therefore infinite and universal in that I comprehend myself as this I. This is the concept of personhood: *I am the force that can hold these contradictory elements apart; I am this absolute bond.* All human value consists in

[66] *PhS* §482.

[67] *PhS* §480. See also Nietzsche's conception of the servile morality and mentality, *Beyond Good and Evil* and *Genealogy of Morals*, both trans. W. Walter Kaufmann, in *Nietzsche, Basic Writings*, Modern Language Edition (New York, 2000). See also Williams, *Tragedy, Recognition and the Death of God*, ch. 2.

[68] *PR* §35Z.

> knowing oneself as person. Contained within myself, *I am absolute negativity, the absolute activity of my self-relating*. What the immediacy of being corresponds to is that my being becomes freedom, that my reality is freedom itself."[69]

Note that the "I" is not simply either its infinite pole of independent, pure self-relation, or its finite pole of relation to and dependence on other. The I, like the concept, is a relation of relations. As a relation, it both forces its contradictory elements apart (diremption, *Urteil*), and holds them together (syllogism). It is their absolute bond, or binding tie. How one unites them, adjusts the claims of each vis-à-vis the other, constitutes and expresses one's personhood. Personhood is the act of gathering and taking command of one's various elements, the act of returning from these various dimensions into oneself (*Fürsichsein*), and thereby achieving existence as a person, that is capable of owning property that satisfies its needs, and of having an ethical life and religion. How one accomplishes this shapes the actuality, value, and worth of one's achieved personhood for which one is responsible, because the act whereby one returns to and takes possession and command of oneself is inalienable.[70] A stone does not have these problems![71] For example, a stone is incapable of being alienated from itself. As persons we have to contend with loss of property, loss of health, loss of freedom—becoming coerced, dominated, and/or enslaved by others; moreover, we are responsible to some extent even for the non-actualization of our freedom because the act of being-for-oneself is inalienable.

In his *Philosophy of Religion* Hegel elaborates further on the lived contradiction of being both infinite and finite; it is a unity in duality and conflict.

> These two sides seek each other and flee each other. I am this conflict and this conciliation. . . . I am the relation of these two sides; these two extremes are each just me who connects them. This holding together, the connecting, is itself *this conflict of self within unity, this uniting of self in the conflict*. In other words, I am the conflict, for the conflict is precisely this clash, which is not an indifference of the two as distinct, but is their bonding together. *I am . . . the union of what utterly flies apart; and it is just this contact that is itself this double, clashing relation as relation.*[72]

In this text Hegel portrays the attraction and repulsion of the two poles; they are not static; they can and do come into conflict. I am this conflict and the conciliation of the two. The self is a unity in conflict, and conflict in unity. I am the "union of what utterly flies apart"; this contingent unity signifies that the self-relation is unstable and vulnerable.

[69] *Lectures on Natural Right and Political Science* (Heidelberg, 1817), Wannenmann Nachschrift, trans. in Hegel, *Lectures on Natural Right 1817–8*, trans. M. Stewart and P. C. Hodgson (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995), §12, pp. 61–2.

[70] *PR* §66.

[71] *SL* 778: Hegel notes that a stone does not have the inconvenience of standing in its own way. But a person, as relation of relations, is often plagued by such "inconvenience."

[72] *LPR* 1. 212–13; emphasis added.

It is inherent in personhood that, as this person, I am limited, determinate, and finite "and yet totally pure self-reference, and thus know myself in my finitude as free."[73] For Hegel, the consciousness of subjectivity is the gathering and concentration of the entire self—needs, inclinations, desires, volitions—into a single comprehensive and yet abstract point—to wit, the self takes possession of itself. It is *for itself*, and expresses its being-for-self by asserting itself in the first person: "I."

> Personhood begins only at that point where the subjective has not merely a consciousness of itself in general as concrete and in some way determinate, but a consciousness of itself as a completely abstract I in which all concrete limitation and validity are negated and invalidated. In personhood, therefore, there is knowledge of the self as object, but as an object raised by thought to simple infinity and hence purely identical with itself. Insofar as they have not yet attained the pure thought and knowledge of themselves, individuals and peoples do not yet possess personhood.[74]

Individuals may possess the capacity for personhood, of taking possession of oneself in freedom, and so on, and of asserting this in the first person "I," without achieving, realizing, or asserting it. Nevertheless, this capacity for personhood is inalienable. For Hegel it is the general capacity for right and is the ontological basis of abstract right.[75] It is what is violated and injured when right is denied—for example, slavery. That being said, the capacity for personhood and the account of the person in abstract right by no means exhaust Hegel's account of personhood.

An equally important dimension of personhood is recognition. Here the focus is on being-for-other and the challenges this poses for one's own identity or being-for-self. Hegel explored these in his famous account of the life-and-death struggle for recognition. The starting point is the immediate certainty of the pre-recognitive situation in which each seeks to compel the other's recognition. The resort to coercion and compulsion is self-defeating, for, if it ends in the death of both parties, this proves only that each despised life. Master/slave as an institution puts an end to the life and death struggle, but it is an unequal recognition based on coercion and the threat of death. It too falls short and rests upon the coercion of freedom, which is a contradiction. Only mutual recognition dissolves the inequality and makes possible the mutual realization of freedom as union with other. In the *Phenomenology of Spirit* mutual recognition is the existential origin of spirit, the I that is a We.

The *Philosophy of Right* presupposes the deduction of right in the account of mutual recognition in the *Encyclopedia Philosophy of Spirit*.[76] In abstract right, Hegel discusses contract and ownership (*Eigentum*). Contract is a common will, which presupposes the possibility of mutual recognition. Further, mutual

[73] *PR* §35. [74] *PR* §35R. [75] *PR* §36. [76] *E.* §§430–6.

recognition by others transforms the mere contingent fact of *possession* into ownership, which is the right to exclude others. Ownership, as a property relation, presupposes, but does not exhaust, mutual recognition. The crucial point for Hegel is that the mediation of freedom and self-identity in mutual recognition is the foundation of right, including ownership, and not the other way around. Hegel pulls all this together in the following passage:

> In property-ownership the person is brought into union with himself. But the thing (*Sache*) is an abstract externality, and the 'I' that places its will in the thing is likewise abstractly external. The *concrete* return of me into myself in externality is this: that I, as person, the infinite relation of myself to myself, am the repulsion of myself from myself , and have the existence of my *personhood in the being of other persons*, namely, in my relation to them and in being recognized [*Anerkanntsein*] by them, a recognition that is reciprocal and mutual.[77]

The I that places its will in the thing (*Sache*) and takes possession of it is, like the abstract externality of the thing, abstractly external to itself. However, the self, considered merely and abstractly as owner, does not yet return to itself fully from such externality, in a way that checks or places its narrow acquisitive self-seeking and narcissism in a larger context. It remains a self-seeking I in the narrow and limited sense. Rather the concrete return to self, wherein the I becomes a We, requires a deeper, more complex mediation in the recognition of others. Hegel says that I, as person, have not merely my ownership, but the very existence of my *personhood* in the being of other persons. The transformation of mere possession (*Besitz*) into legal ownership (*Eigentum*) is mediated by a recognition that is reciprocal and mutual: the others recognize me explicitly as owner with the right to exclude them from my property, on the condition that I recognize their right to exclude me from their property. To be sure, the recognition of the I merely as owner remains abstract; for the human being is more than merely an owner of property. Only when and as recognized in all its fundamental rights by others does the I return to itself in its proper universality. Hegel views ownership as an abstraction from the general process of mutual recognition constitutive of ethical life and spirit, wherein the I becomes a We—becomes a recognized person—in the first place.

The importance of recognition and its significance for the achievement of universal personhood can be appreciated from the opposite condition—namely, misrecognition or the absence of recognition, as Hegel famously observes:

> What the slave lacks is the recognition [*Anerkennung*] of his personhood. But the principle of personhood is *universality*. The master considers the slave not as a

[77] *E.* §490. The "I is both simple relation-to-self and utter relation-to-other" (*EL* §143Z). We explore the logical grounding of these claims in Ch. 5, Sect. 3.

> person, but as a thing devoid of selfhood [*selbstlose Sache*]. And the slave does not count [for himself] as an 'I', because the master is his 'I' instead.[78]

The question of personhood is thus bound up not merely with the abstract person as owner of property that is Hegel's principal concern in abstract right, but with the struggle for recognition, the outcome of which decides who and what is accorded the status of personhood. Hegel formulates the legal–cultural–historical outcome of a process of recognition in which both philosophy and religion have played important parts: "It is part of education, of thinking as consciousness of the individual in the form of universality, that I am apprehended as a universal person, in which [respect] all are identical. A human being counts as such because he is a human being, not because he is a Jew, Catholic, Protestant, German, Italian, etc."[79] We could say that this abstract understanding of personhood constitutes the "sublime" pole, in contrast to the "ordinary" pole.

Personhood is thus both sublime and wholly ordinary; it contains the unity of the infinite and the utterly finite, of the determinate boundary and the completely unbounded. The supreme achievement of the person is to support this contradiction, which nothing in the natural realm contains or could endure.[80]

Hegel's ontological analysis of personhood has a dipolar structure; it is both infinite and finite, both abstract universal and particular. This poses the problem of personhood, the person both supports and must reconcile the contradiction constitutive of its dipolar opposition, or is prevented from such reconciliation. Reconciliation is not simply or automatically given; it is a task that must be achieved, and that requires freedom and recognition of that freedom by others. Personhood is freely accomplished through enduring and suspending its constitutive contradictions, which Hegel describes thus:

> The concluding and immediate singularity [*Einzelheit*] of the person relates itself to a nature which it finds before it. Hence the personhood of the will stands in contrast to [objective] nature as something subjective. But since personhood is implicitly infinite and universal, *the limitation of being 'merely subjective' contradicts it*, and makes it appear as null and void. *Personhood is that activity which*

[78] *EL* §163Z1. Roman Law denied slaves rights by denying them the status of being *persona*; in other words, to be a slave is to be denied recognition and thus an "unperson" or subhuman *Untermensch*.

[79] *PR* §209R. According to Hegel, "the right of subjective freedom is the pivotal and focal point of the difference between antiquity and modernity. This right, in its infinity, is expressed in Christianity and it has become the universal and actual principle of a new form of the world. Its more specific shapes include love, the romantic, the eternal salvation of the individual as a end, morality and conscience . . . " (*PR* §124R). The right of subjective freedom and universal personhood is itself grounded in the state as an ethical institution. Cf. *PR* §57.

[80] *PR* §35A.

> *suspends this limitation and gives itself reality*—or, what amounts to the same thing, which posits that existence as its own.[81]

Compare this suspension of subjectivity as merely subjective and giving itself reality with Hegel's recasting of the ontological proof in the logic. To be sure, God is not a finite person, but Hegel's logic is a general ontology. If God is God's own ontological proof, that proof for Hegel consists in the bringing-forth of God by the action of suspending the limits of subjectivity of the concept. That is, by negating and transcending its limit of being merely subjective, the concept sublates itself into existence.[82] What interests us is that, in Hegel's account, God's own proof is God's self-realization, which also manifests what Hegel means and calls the "this-ness," the personhood of God. Conversely, the free expression and realization of the personhood of God is God's own ontological proof, the suspension of the merely subjective concept in its immediate singularity, *Einzelheit*. Divine personhood and the ontological proof, both based on the singularity (*Einzelheit*) of the concept, are different aspects and dimensions of one and the same action.[83]

Whether we are speaking of the personhood of God or finite human beings, the free achievement of personhood involves an enduring of contradiction and the sublation of the contradiction between its infinitude and finitude. We have not yet addressed the question concerning the infinite–finite relation, and the implications this has for religion and theology. We postpone these issues, pending further clarification of personhood and freedom, both in the *Philosophy of Right* and in the *Logic*.

5. TYPES OF FREEDOM IN THE *PHILOSOPHY OF RIGHT*

Hegel sketches his dialectical account of freedom and personhood in *Philosophy of Right* §§5–7. The starting point is negative freedom—that is, the capacity to abstract from every determination in which I find myself or which I have posited in myself. Negative freedom is a "flight from every content as a *limitation*."[84] Negative freedom is radically indeterminate; it is a freedom of the void. Every determinacy is regarded as a limitation on freedom. Such a freedom is wholly abstract and indeterminate. It grasps only one possibility of freedom and wills only one thing, pure free self-relation and its preservation. The "realization" and preservation of such negative freedom requires the negation of every determinacy. But this means that it is entirely

[81] *PR* §39; emphasis added. I have revised the English translation.
[82] *EL* §123Z; cf. §192Z, where Hegel uses this language.
[83] These "developments" of the concept are clarified in Ch. 3, Appendix.
[84] *PR* §5.

turned inward and wills nothing. It is the freedom of the void—the abstract universal—raised to the status of a passion. If it remains purely theoretical, it becomes a fanaticism of pure contemplation. If it turns to actuality and practice in the realm of politics and religion, it becomes a fanaticism of destruction. Hegel observes that the human being is capable of negating and abandoning all things, even its own life.

The problem with negative freedom is not only its potential and actual destructiveness. As the will of the void, its willing exists only in the negative form of abstraction from determinacy; consequently, it never makes the transition to determinacy and thus it never becomes actual. For to become actual it would have to will *something*. But for it "every something" is a limitation on its pure freedom. Such negative freedom must be overcome. Its overcoming begins with a self-reflective insight that the abstraction from all determinacy is not without its own determinacy—namely, its determination is to be free from all determination. So in fleeing the determinacy that it imagines will imprison it, it flees itself. Despite its flight from determinacy, it nevertheless has a determination—one that is contradictory and one-sided.

The second type—affirmative freedom—begins by negating and cancelling the first abstract negativity.[85] The second emerges from the first by a dialectical critique of it. "For since [the first] is *abstraction* from all determinacy, thereby it reveals that it is not *without* determinacy . . . the fact that it is abstract and one-sided is its determinacy, deficiency and finitude."[86] The negation of abstract freedom opens an alternative: willing *something* (*Etwas*). The something is *determinate*. It is only in willing *something* that freedom becomes affirmative and actual.

However, this affirmative freedom is equally one-sided. It wills something, and thus is determinate. But it is one-sidedly determinate. Particularization involves limitation. In order to become actual, the will must limit itself, and, in thus limiting itself, loses itself—that is, negates its pure abstract self-relation or abstract freedom. The particularization of the will involves limitation, but limitation implies the loss of pure freedom. If the indeterminate, negative freedom signifies the *infinitude* of freedom and the will, the determinate affirmative freedom signifies its *finitude*. Both views are abstract and one-sided. They do not exhaust the possibilities of freedom; instead they represent only its opposite possibilities, which contradict each other. In the former, freedom flees from determinacy to indeterminacy in which it loses itself and never becomes actual; in the latter, something is affirmed, but here freedom loses itself in and becomes bound to determinacy and limitation. Both types fail to achieve actuality—that is, concrete universality (*Einzelheit*) and personhood.

[85] *PR* §6. [86] *PR* §6.

This contradiction is resolved in concrete freedom that is the unity of these opposing elements. Hegel observes that the first two moments of freedom are easy to understand because they are moments of the understanding and, taken as external to and separated from each other, they are devoid of truth.[87] Taken together they constitute the posited contradiction of the infinity and finitude of the will—the notorious dualism and spurious infinity of the Kantian–Fichtean position.[88] It is the actual unity of these contradictory elements in concrete freedom that is difficult and requires dialectical philosophy; to conceive this unity in opposing determinations is a speculative task. Hegel describes it thus:

> The will is the unity of both these moments—*particularity* [*Besonderheit*] reflected into itself and thereby restored to *universality*—singularity. It is *singularity* [*Einzelheit*], the self-determination of the I in that it posits itself as the negative of itself, that is, as determinate and limited, and at the same time it remains with itself [*bei sich*], that is, in identity with itself as universality, and in this determination—singularity—it coalesces with itself—both universal and particular in unity.[89]

The will as singularity (*Einzelheit*) is the unity of infinite negative freedom that wills the void, and of finite determinate freedom that wills something (*Etwas*) (and is tied to the something). *Einzelheit* means that the will remains *at home with itself in its other*—the determinate "something" that it wills. This condition is concrete freedom—to wit, being-at-home-with-self-in-other. It is a concrete *unity in and through difference*.

Note that concrete freedom is not something *given*; it has to be achieved in a movement Hegel describes as return to self out of otherness:

> When we say that the *will is universal* and the *will determines itself*, we speak as if the will were already assumed to be a subject or a substratum. But the will is not actual and universal *prior* to its self-determining or *prior* to the sublation and rendering fluid of this self-determining. Rather the will is actual—the actual unity of its moments—as this self-mediating activity and return to itself.[90]

The moment of return to self out of otherness is important for Hegel's concept of freedom, his concept of person, and his concept of the concept. The return to self out of otherness is the third, concrete moment of freedom, the unity of the first two moments of the will. The third moment of the concept—its singularity (*Einzelheit*)—reconciles its prior moments of abstract universality and abstract particularity (*Besonderheit*). While every moment of the concept is the whole concept, "singularity, the subject, is the concept posited as a

[87] *PR* §7. [88] See *SL* 136; cf. also *PR* §§6, 79. [89] *PR* §7.

[90] *PR* 7R. Hegel rejects the metaphysics of the subject as substratum because it is part of the dualism of the inner and the outer. He maintains instead that the person is nothing but the series of his actions. *EL* §140+Z.

totality."[91] Hegel's concept of *Persönlichkeit* expresses the singularity of the concept in which the subject, as concept, is free, and posits itself as an actual totality, a concrete unity in difference of universality and particularity.

Hegel elaborates this logical structure and concept of the will in the language of the *Logic*:

> Every self-consciousness knows itself as universal, as the possibility of abstracting from everything determinate, and as particular (*Besondere*) with a determinate object, content and end. But these two moments are only abstractions; what is concrete and true (and everything true is concrete) is the universality which has the particular [*Besondere*] as its opposite, but this particular, through its reflection into itself, has been reconciled with the universal. *This unity is singularity* [*Einzelheit*], *but not in its immediacy as a single unit—as in the common idea* [*Vorstellung*] *of singularity. Rather this unity is singularity in accordance with the concept* [see *EL* §§112–14]; in other words this singularity is in fact none other 'than the concept itself, to wit, *Einzelheit*.[92]

There are several important issues clarified in this passage. First, for Hegel the singularity (*Einzelheit*) of the concept (*Begriff*) is the concrete universal, which must be distinguished from the atomistic *representation* of singularity of the understanding.[93] Atomism fails to see that its abstract one is dialectically related to the many that it excludes, and that the contradiction of the One and the Many is resolved in the return to self-constitutive of the self-relation, not merely as abstract being for self (*Fürsichsein*), but as the unity of being-for-self and being-for-other. Singularity is the return to self out of otherness, and the coalescence with self as the achieved mediation and union of both universality and particularity.

Second, atomistic individualism is for Hegel the most stubborn error:

> Self-subsistence pushed to the point of the one as a being-for-self [*Fürsichsein*] is an abstract formal independence that destroys itself. It is the supreme, most stubborn error that takes itself to be the highest truth, manifesting itself in more concrete forms as abstract freedom, pure ego, and further as evil.[94]

The above passage vividly conveys the fundamental problems with "pure" freedom—to wit, its formal emptiness and abstract independence. Its empty

[91] *EL* §163R. The other moments of the concept are abstract universality and particularity (*Besonderheit*).

[92] *PR* §7R; emphasis added. In *PR* §7 Hegel refers to *Encyclopedia* §§112–14 for his discussion of the concept and its concluding term, *Einzelheit*. But the only edition of the *Encyclopedia Logic* in existence at the time of publication of the *Philosophy of Right* (1820–1) was the 1817 edition. In the 1830 edition, §§112–14 deal with the logic of essence, determinations of reflection, not with the doctrine of the concept. Hegel's actual reference, updated for the 3rd 1830 edition of the *Encyclopedia*, is to §§160–5, the opening of the doctrine of the concept.

[93] *EL* §§95, 98.

[94] *SL* 172; cf. Boehme's Fall of Lucifer, discussed in Ch. 6.

purity and abstraction mean that it is unable to be at home in and with any determinacy whatsoever. That is why it cannot come to an affirmative expression; rather its expression is only destructive. Clearly this is one-sided. On the other hand, in the second moment of the will, we learn that, in order to become actual, the will must will something (*Etwas*). In willing something the will negates its prior indeterminateness and becomes determinate. To become actual the will must limit itself. But in so limiting itself, the will loses itself in its determination—to wit, it loses itself in finitude. Clearly this will of something, despite its affirmativity, is as one-sided as the first. There must an alternative.

Hegel agrees that there is, and characterizes it as follows, further elaborating the logical structure and concept of the will as a totality.

> What is properly called the will contains both the preceding moments, 'I' as such is primarily pure activity, the universal which is with itself [*bei sich*]; but this universal determines itself, and to that extent is no longer with itself but posits itself as an other and ceases to be the universal. Then the third moment is that the 'I' is with itself in its limitation, in this other; as it determines itself, it nevertheless still remains with itself and does not cease to hold fast to the universal. This then is the concrete sense of freedom, whereas the two previous moments have been found to be thoroughly abstract and one-sided.[95]

The first two moments of the will constitute a contradiction, but the will endures the contradiction such that it remains with itself in its other. But what does this mean?

Hegel illustrates what he means by the union of negative freedom and determinate freedom in the "singularity [*Einzelheit*] according to the concept".[96] He defines this as follows:

> But we already possess this freedom . . . for example, in friendship and love. Here we are not one-sidedly within ourselves, but willingly *limit* ourselves with reference to an other, while nevertheless knowing ourselves in this limitation as ourselves. In this determinacy the human being should not feel determined; on the contrary, he attains his self-consciousness only by regarding the other as other. Thus freedom lies neither in indeterminacy nor in determinacy, but is both at once. . . . *Freedom is to will something determinate, yet to be at home with oneself in this determinacy and to return once more to the universal.*[97]

This remark on friendship and love implies that being at home with oneself in determinacy depends on the third moment of return to oneself as universal. The condition of returning to oneself is mutual–reciprocal recognition. Mutual recognition suspends the one-sided coercion and domination through which the master imposes himself as the personhood of the slave, and the slave is reduced to the status of a mere thing. Denied recognition by the master, the

[95] *PR* §7A. [96] *PR* §7R. [97] *PR* §7A; emphasis added.

slave does not return to himself as affirmatively universal and does not achieve personhood. Either that return is prevented by the threat of violence and the fear of death, or rather, when the slave returns to himself, he finds himself self-displaced by the master instead. The master is the slave's "I." In mutual recognition such coercion is suspended in a unity in and through difference. We will something determinate and yet are at home with ourselves in this other and through it are elevated to the concrete universal (the I becomes a We).

It is also apparent that Hegel's account of freedom in the *Philosophy of Right*, §§5-7, does not provide explanation, much less justification, for introducing the mutual recognition inherent in love and friendship into the apparently individual conception of the will in abstract right. The account of freedom in §7 is abstract, in part because it introduces us to abstract right, where Hegel treats contract and property. While the concept of recognition is clearly presupposed in contract, abstract right is restricted methodologically to considering human beings abstractly as owners of property who make contracts about exchanging it.[98] In the treatment of abstract right and morality Hegel pursues a methodological individualism, and the brackets of the abstraction are not removed until part three—ethical life (family, civil society, and state). More fundamentally, the *Philosophy of Right* presupposes the deduction of objective spirit and right in the *Encyclopedia* account of mutual recognition.

Hegel's 1822–5 *Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit* are especially relevant, if not indispensable to this issue. These lectures provide important clarifications of Hegel's terminology and his distinction between *immediate* singularity (*Einzelheit*) and *universal* singularity, and the justification for Hegel's claims about friendship and love as examples of freedom in Hegel's specific sense of being at home with oneself in one's other. This interpretation of these issues receive its logical grounding in the dialectic of determinate being—the something and other—that is the logical origin of the subject.[99]

6. RECOGNITION IN THE *PHILOSOPHY OF SPIRIT*

As we have seen, Hegel's concept of the person is dipolar, constituted by infinite and finite poles, or universal and particular, freedom as abstract identity—the ability to negate every determinacy—negative or abstract freedom, and nature, or living immersed in determinacy such as natural drive, or

[98] *PR* §71R: "Contract presupposes that the contracting parties *recognize* each other as persons and owners of property; and since it is a relationship of objective spirit, the moment of recognition is already contained and presupposed within it (cf. §35 and remarks to §57)."

[99] See Ch. 5, Sect. 3.

self-chosen determinacy (inclination). True freedom is neither of these (not simply negative, because then the self does not act; but not simply affirmative either, because then the self would remain tied to its determination). Rather, true freedom is remaining at home with oneself in one's freely chosen determinations. The example that Hegel gives in *PR* §7R is friendship and love. The need to reconcile opposition is the problem of living beings generally; in nature it is usually handled for individuals by species drives and instincts. But the requirement that to be and survive is to reconcile immanent oppositions poses in a special way the problem of personhood—namely, coordinating and ordering this polar opposition not only to have determinations (whether according to nature or contrary to nature) but to have them in such a way that one *remains free in determination*.[100] A stone does not have this problem or "inconvenience."[101] The stone simply *is*, but the human being has to *bring itself about*.

> The personhood of the will stands in opposition to nature as subjective. But since personhood within itself is infinite and universal, the limitation of being merely subjective is in contradiction with it and is null and void. Personhood is that which acts to overcome limitation and give itself reality—or what amounts to the same thing, to posit its existence as its own.[102]

The end or goal of such bringing oneself about in freedom is universality, the principle of personhood.[103] This universality is not simply abstract, but concrete, determinate universality. Put simply, consciousness must have developed to the point of recognizing the difference between universal and particular, not simply because it is an advance to distinguish universals from the particulars that embody them, but because the achievement of some degree of concrete universality or universal singularity is necessary in order to avoid or resolve the life-and-death struggle, which prevents the transition from state of nature to civilized spirit.

According to Hegel, the psycho–social presupposition of the famous life-and-death struggle is that the freedom of human beings is in a state of pre-reflective immediacy. Such freedom is immediately identified with *Begierde*, Desire, which seeks only its own satisfaction and immediate gratification. From the perspective of self-seeking desire, the other is regarded as wholly alien, a threat. Under these conditions the main concern is what is *mine*, and the "mine" is an exclusive singular or parochial universal. The problem is that the other is supposed to count or possess validity within this abstract universal, this immediate, exclusive "mine." However, in the condition of pre-reflective immediacy, there is no positing of any difference, so that immediate universality is abstract universality. The immediate end of the self is its own

[100] *PR* §35. [101] *SL* 778; cf. 583—*Begriff* (personhood).
[102] *PR* §39; translation modified. [103] *EL* §163Z.

satisfaction—that is, its own unrestricted self-seeking: what is mine, my purpose, my particularity, my desire, my satisfaction. Immediate self-consciousness has not yet achieved a concept of determinate universality; it still has the form of immediate singularity (*Einzelheit*)—a being for one only.[104] So long as freedom is wholly identified with *immediate singularity*, the other can be perceived only as an intolerable independent threat, which must be subjugated and compelled to serve my desires, including my desire for recognition. So long as the condition of immediate singularity prevails, recognition of other appears to be a negation and/or loss of freedom, unfreedom. In fact, so long as the individuals are immediate singularities, mutual recognition is impossible. Hegel explains:

> The necessity of self-consciousness is for each to give itself *Dasein* in another consciousness; this means that each seeks to become recognized by an Other. But they are both only immediate existents confronting each other, and this means that my recognition of the other self-consciousness is the negation of my own independence, my own freedom. As long as I am posited as this immediate singularity, I am *exclusive particularity*, I cannot suspend my particular singular will. This is the problem. Here *the process of the one becoming recognized by the other cannot take place*, because each asserts its own independence. *Each is unable to recognize the other in itself on account of its own narrow sense of freedom*, and it cannot be recognized by the other because of the exclusive way it is for the other. *Recognition cannot take place on account of the immediate singularity of the self-consciousness*, but also insofar as the being of each appears to the other in a shape that it is unable to recognize because it appears simply as an immediate singular, a wholly external determinate being, not as a free, but merely as an immediate living being. It is an abstract ego, but not actually free in its determinate being. Thus there is posited the contradiction that is supposed to be resolved by mutual coercion and struggle.[105]

Immediate singularity is exclusive singularity, both subjectively and objectively. As long as individuals remain at this level or standpoint, no mutual recognition can occur or is possible. But what is the alternative to immediate singularity as a posture of freedom?

It is universal singularity (*Einzelheit*). Hegel provides the clue: as immediate singularity, each pursues only its own independence, and each is unable to recognize the other in itself. Neither is able to transcend or suspend its exclusive independence. It is impermeable like a stone. Mutual recognition presupposes that a consciousness of universality has been achieved, a sense of a commonality with other that evokes and supports actions of empathy with

[104] *BPhG* §431. This text is important because it makes clear the systematic connection and integration of Hegel's theory of personhood with his account of mutual recognition, spirit, and ethical life.

[105] *BPhG* 79–81; my translation.

others (sympathy) and actions that incorporate the perspective of others into one's own. Such actions achieve an enlarged mentality or spirit—universal singularity. What would this look like? Hegel explains:

> At this standpoint of *Begierde*, we must forget about the relations we are accustomed to. If *we* speak of right, ethical life, love, we know that when I recognize others I recognize their complete personal independence. And we know that when we do so, we do *not* suffer loss of freedom, but rather we gain and increase our freedom. For we know that when others have rights, I also have rights, or that *my right is essentially also the right of the other* . . . We know that in benevolence or in love, my personhood [*Persönlichkeit*] is not lost or destroyed.
>
> However, at the present standpoint of immediacy, where the self is wholly identified with its immediate singularity, such aforementioned relationships do not yet exist. [They are impossible.] Rather . . . the situation is determined thus: that insofar as I am a free self-consciousness, the immediate singularity of my self-consciousness and my freedom are not yet distinguished from each other; consequently I cannot give up anything of my particularity (*Besonderheit*) without also surrendering my freedom and independence. . . . [Here] the "proper" mode of relation goes like this: the self in its immediate singularity cannot tolerate an other against it as independent of it, and so they must necessarily fall into a struggle. . . . Whatever its origins, this drive towards domination of others is evil.[106]

At the level of immediate singularity, freedom is simply and crudely synonymous with self-seeking that is unable to recognize or refuses to affirm the freedom and independence of an other and so strives to eliminate and/or subjugate it.[107] However in the recognitively constituted spheres of ethical life—family, civil society, and state—I recognize and am recognized by everyone without any struggle. Here each is a free (recognized, and thus *universal*) singularity that possesses absolute independence, yet, by virtue of its suspension of its self-seeking desire, it no longer distinguishes itself from others or opposes itself to them, and so is *universal* and *objective*.[108] Hegel cites and reformulates Aristotle's (himself reformulating Plato's) important claim that *my right is the right of the other*. This expression articulates the interconnectedness and solidarity of freedom, *the concrete universal singularity (Einzelheit) and intersubjectivity of personhood and rationality*.[109]

[106] *BPhG* 76–8. [107] *BPhG* 76–8. [108] *E.* §436.

[109] According to Aristotle, pity and fear not only have a cognitive structure, but also presuppose sympathy. Stephen Halliwell observes that Aristotle's theory of tragedy presupposes a strong sense of sympathy. Stephen Halliwell, *Aristotle's Poetics* (London: Duckworth Press, 1986), 176, 183. Sympathy not only underlies *mimesis*; it has an intersubjective structure: it involves the recognition of a *common element*, or *community*, between the subject (pitier) and the object (pitied). As Halliwell notes, "this notion of sympathy, which underlies both pity and fear, is not a vaguely humanitarian instinct: it is the capacity to recognize a likeness between oneself and the object of one's emotions, a likeness which imports . . . a sense that one could imagine suffering such things oneself" (Halliwell, *Aristotle's Poetics*, 173). Without recognition of this common element or community, pity would not be possible, and would be replaced with

7. THE UNIVERSAL SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE *PHILOSOPHY OF SPIRIT*

Hegel's account of the universal self-consciousness in his *Encyclopedia Phenomenology* is important and runs as follows:

> The universal self-consciousness is the affirmative knowing [of] self in another self, in which unity each as free singularity [*Einzelheit*] possesses absolute independence, but by virtue of the negation of its immediacy or *Begierde*, no longer distinguishes itself from the other. Each is universal self-consciousness and objective. Each thus possesses real universality as reciprocity/mutuality, since it knows itself to be recognized in a free other, and conversely each knows this insofar as he recognizes the other and knows him to be free.[110]

This universal consciousness is constituted as reciprocal, affirmative self-recognition in other; here difference, determinacy, and limit are no longer regarded as obstacles to freedom but rather are transformed into conditions of its realization:

> Here the limit or restriction that previously was immanent in desire and self-seeking is suspended. Self-consciousness thus reaches beyond itself; it continues in an other self-consciousness so that there are no longer two self-seeking individuals opposed to each other, but rather a single self-consciousness, and thus it is a universal self-consciousness.[111]

The "personhood" of the concept expresses its singularity. In friendship and love, which are determinate shapes of mutual recognition, singularity is intersubjectively mediated, and the mentality is enlarged from an I to a We. The We is an enlarged mentality, a higher-order universal singularity and personhood. Each receives from the other and possesses itself absolute independence or freedom. This is due to the fact that, by the negation of its immediacy and the sublation of its desire from narrow self-preoccupation into caring for the other, each no longer distinguishes itself completely from the other. But the "I" has not

mere indifference. However, recognition of this community does not obliterate the intersubjective distance between pitier and pitied. As Halliwell notes, "the sort of sympathy which pity entails requires a certain distance between pitier and pitied; if this distance is removed, the predominantly altruistic emotion of pity is obliterated by a practically complete affective identification between oneself and the other" (Halliwell, *Aristotle's Poetics*, 178). Halliwell's formulations presuppose a yet deeper level, the Hegelian dialectical unity in and through difference, or identity of identity and difference. The Hegelian We is not the all-one of totalitarianism, but a differentiated totality: an I that is a we and a we that is an I. Only such an articulated, differentiated totality is adequate to Hegel's neo-Aristotelian claim that my right is the right of the other, that I have rights only when others have the same rights.

[110] *E.* §436. Recall that the *Encyclopedia* furnishes ("deduces") the concepts of right and concrete universality presupposed by the *Philosophy of Right*. *PR* §2.

[111] *Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit 1827/8*, trans. with introduction by R. R. Williams (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 17; emphasis added.

disappeared; rather the "I" has been transformed into a "We." Freedom consists in free affirmative reciprocity and mutuality: "In this condition of universal freedom, when I am reflected into myself, I am immediately reflected into the other, and conversely, I am related immediately to myself because I am related to others."[112] In his lectures Hegel elaborates further:

> The process of consciousness that we are considering, is the *realization of the concept*. What is posited in the concept . . . —the ideality of the other and the unity of the two—is the abstract. The reality is that each of these moments obtains a concrete meaning, that each of these moments itself is the concept as a whole. Thus in friendship the two sides constitute this whole. Each [is] I, and I in such a way that the I, since it is not merely an unyielding individual, but has suspended itself, has negated itself and has its conscious relation to itself in the self-consciousness of the other.[113]

The universal consciousness arises out of the mutual sublation of narrow self-interest and a mutual surpassing of individual limits:

> These abstract determinations are present in much more concrete forms. The substance of this self-consciousness is the universality—of a self-knowledge that leaves behind self-seeking [particularity] and that continues itself in union with the other. This condition is found in love. . . . All the virtues have this foundation, as does love . . . [114]

In friendship and love, each party is reciprocally affirmed and enriched by its other. Hegel makes this point clear and develops it further in his account of marriage and family.

Hegel observes that the objective origin of marriage is the free consent of the persons concerned, "and in particular their consent to *constitute a single person* and to give up their natural and individual personalities within this union. In this respect, their union is a self-limitation, but since they attain their substantial self-consciousness within it, it is in fact their liberation."[115] Marriage is the formation of a higher-order person or spirit (*Geist*) constituted by the sublation of natural and merely individual personhood. Marriage is an example of corporate personhood (*Persönlichkeit*). This sublation of natural, acquisitive, and possessive individualism into corporate personhood is the ethical aspect of marriage:

> The ethical aspect of marriage consists in the consciousness of the union itself as the substantial end, and hence in love, trust and the sharing of the whole of

[112] *E.* §436+Z.

[113] *Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit 1827–8*, 144. Ferdinand Walter heard Hegel say: "In friendship and love, I exist not simply for myself but am in an other and yet independent. Here therefore are two, so that both are no longer the abstract moment of the whole concept . . ."

[114] *Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit 1827/8*, 174; emphasis added.

[115] *PR* §162.

> individual existence. When this disposition . . . is present, the natural drive is reduced to . . . a moment of nature which is destined to be extinguished in its very satisfaction, while the spiritual bond asserts its rights as the substantial factor and thereby stands as indissoluble in itself and exalted above the contingency of the passions and momentary capriciousness.[116]

Hegel declares that, while marriage may begin in the contractual standpoint of abstract right characterized by free consenting individuals, it is something more than a contract: "the precise nature of marriage is to begin from the point of view of contract—i.e., that of individual personhood as a self-conscious unit—in order to supersede it [*ihn aufzuheben*]. That identification of personalities whereby the family is a *single person* and its members are its accidents . . . is the ethical spirit [*Geist*]."[117] However, while the family is a corporate person, it is still a parochial universal because it has outsiders.

The point to be underscored here is Hegel's distinction between immediate pre-recognitive singularity and universal recognitive singularity in the sense of the concrete universality of ethical life in his *Philosophy of Right*.[118] "Singularity . . . is not to be taken in the sense of merely immediate singularity as when we speak of single things or single human beings."[119] Singularity, as the concept in its moment of concrete universality, is not a person or an individual, but rather a universal corporate person or personhood. However, this is not to restrict personhood to institutions like family or corporations in civil society. On the contrary, "it is the nature of humanity to press onward to agreement with others; human nature only really exists in an achieved community of minds."[120]

Hegel identifies the intersubjective universal consciousness constitutive of spirit as "the *Begriff* that knows itself in its objectivity as subjectivity identical with itself and therefore knows itself to be universal . . . "[121] As the realization of *Einzelheit*, the universal self-consciousness is both individual and universal, and Hegel claims this recognitive social universality "is the form of the consciousness of the substance of every essential ethical [*sittliche*] institution—family, fatherland, state—and of all the virtues—love, friendship, courage, honor, reputation."[122] These institutions and virtues are shapes of determinate universality; they display the singularity (*Einzelheit*) of the concept (*Begriff*), and as such constitute its *Persönlichkeit*—to wit, personhood in the extended sense. They are personhood in a richer, more concrete sense than "the abstract person" in abstract right.

Finally, it should be noted that the concrete universal consciousness is not a "pantheism" of personhood that denies or subverts individual differences. On the contrary.

[116] *PR* §163. [117] *PR* §163R. [118] *PR* §7R. [119] *EL* §163R.
[120] *PhS* §69. [121] *E.* §436R. [122] *E.* §436R.

> we have here, on the one hand, the tremendous diremption of spirit into diverse selves, who are, in and for themselves and for each other, completely free, independent, absolutely impenetrable, offering resistance, and who are, on the other hand, nevertheless at the same time identical with each other and therefore not independent, not impenetrable, but who have as it were coalesced and united with each other. This relation is of a completely speculative type. If one believes that the speculative is something abstract and other-worldly, one need only consider the content of the relation in order to become convinced of the groundlessness of such belief.[123]

Hegel's concept in general, and his concept of the state in particular, is an articulated totality.[124] As an articulated totality, its moments are both distinguished from each other and related to each other. In Hegel's view the concept as an articulated whole exhibits both identity and difference. Both are necessary to its articulation. If the whole lacked identity, it would collapse into a mere aggregate of different, unrelated atoms, which could be held together only by external force as in mechanism. But, if it lacked difference, it would collapse into abstract identity, the all-one of totalitarianism. Either way it would cease to be an articulated, interconnected whole, present in and differentiated by its members. But, because that is so, the articulated identity of the whole is dependent on difference, and not exclusive of difference. Identity qualified by difference excludes absolute undifferentiated identity. Conversely, difference qualified by identity excludes absolute difference.[125]

Hegel conceives persons, families, and institutions like the state, as social organisms. Recall that the principle of organism as an articulated whole is to be an identity of identity and difference, or unity in and through difference. So conceived, organism expresses the resolution of a contradiction "that is not merely our reflection, but is objective in living subjects themselves. The existence of these organisms we may therefore designate as an objective idealism."[126] Hegel's concept of personhood, including the *Persönlichkeit Geistes*, is set within this holistic concept and context. That is, for Hegel the doctrine of God belongs to the doctrine of religion, and the doctrine of religion, as treated within the philosophy of religion, is the concluding discipline of the philosophy of absolute spirit.

What has all this to do with the personhood of God? The doctrine of God belongs to the doctrine of religion and absolute spirit. Hegel's *Logic* is a general ontology; as such it is prior to nature and spirit. But there is no special metaphysics of divine being or divine personhood. God is not an exception to the categories, but, as the true infinite, their chief exemplification. Having

[123] *E.* §436Z. [124] *E.* §160.

[125] Cf. Errol Harris, *Formal, Transcendental and Dialectical Thinking* (Lanham, MD: University Presses of America, 1983), ch. 8.

[126] *Aesthetics*, 1. 122; *Werke*, 13. 166.

said that, Hegel preserves a distinction between finite and infinite, but it is not the dualism of the tradition. It figures importantly in his distinction between the true infinite and the spurious infinite in the *Logic*. The true infinite belongs to the speculative nucleus of Hegel's system of philosophy; he calls it "the basic concept in philosophy."[127] The true infinite is logically defined as universal singularity. In the *Logic* the true infinite is embodied in the absolute idea, which is the locus of divine personhood. It is also treated in his *Philosophy of Religion* and *Lectures on the Proofs*. It holds the key to understanding the universal singularity of the concept and, with that, the personhood of absolute spirit.

Hegel's speculative theology and its claims would make no sense if God were conceived as abstract transcendence, or as impersonal substance (absolute necessity) or simply as abstract subject. Hegel declares that, if any concept of God lacks personhood, it is inadequate. In the *Philosophy of Religion*, Hegel defines religion as the relation of human spirit to absolute spirit, and conceives absolute spirit as "God existing as community." For this concept of God, personhood is not optional; it is required because it is inherent in Hegel's concept of absolute spirit.

[127] *EL* §95R; I take the term "speculative nucleus" from *HILH*. Cf. R. Williams, "Hegel's Concept of the True Infinite," *Owl of Minerva*, 42/1–2 (2010–11), 89–122.

5

The Personhood of the Absolute in the *Logic*

> God is the completely universal object, not some particularity or other, but the highest personhood, the most universal personhood itself, *singularity in its absolute universality*.
>
> (*LPR* 1. 263)

The personhood of the absolute is a not unimportant topic for Hegel, part of his anti-formalist critique of the abstract universal and its legacy from classical metaphysics through Kant's critical philosophy. As we have seen, Hegel conceives persons and personhood through the logical concept that also constitutes his reconstruction of the ontological proof. Specifically, he identifies personhood with the third moment of the concept, its singularity (*Einzelheit*), which is determinate universality that particularizes and reconciles abstract negative–indeterminate universality with abstract affirmative particularity (*Besonderheit*). Singularity is thus the actuality of the concept; it is the determinate universality (*die bestimmte Allgemeinheit*) that Hegel expresses as the "determinate determinate [*das bestimmte Bestimmte*],"[1] in order to signify that it is constituted through negation of negation.[2] The issue of personhood arises in his critique of formalism, abstract universals, and abstract transcendence of traditional metaphysics, including natural theology, which through their "abstraction which lets drop the particular"[3] culminate in the highest being, an abstract term devoid of content. He adds:

> Life, spirit, God, the pure concept itself, are beyond the grasp of abstraction, because it *deprives its products of singularity, of the principle of individuality* [*Individualität*] *and personhood*, and so arrives at nothing else but universalities devoid of life, spirit, colour and filling.[4]

[1] *WL* 6. 296; *SL* 618. Miller translates *Einzelheit* as individuality, but I follow Harris and Hodgson in translating it as singularity. See Harris, in *EL*, p. xix; Hodgson, in *LPR* 3. 26–30.
[2] Singularity is "the self-relating determinacy, the determinate determinate" (*WL* 6. 296; *SL* 618).
[3] *SL* 619. [4] *SL* 619; emphasis added.

Hegel tells us that he combines logic and metaphysics.[5] Hegel's metaphysics includes a critique of pre-critical metaphysics as objective dogmatism. Hegel observes that, while Kant put an end to dogmatic metaphysics, he nevertheless uncritically accepted and continued using the abstract universal—traditional logical categories—in his philosophy. The result is that Kant replaced the objective dogmatism of metaphysics with a subjective dogmatism of the subject. Hegel's alternative to classical metaphysics and to critical philosophy is foreshadowed in his assertion that the true must be grasped and expressed not only as substance, but equally as self-determining subject. Of this absolute, "it must be said that it is essentially a result, that only in the end is it what it truly is . . . to wit, actual, subject."[6] The absolute subject is a result, a self-mediated immediacy constituted through negation of negation, an end that is the true beginning.

The absolute idea, as the unity of concept and objectivity/reality, is the ultimate level and realization of the doctrine of the concept, which is treated in book three of the *Logic*. In the final chapter, absolute subjectivity is superseded in concreteness by absolute personhood. Personhood emerges in the self-consciousness of dialectical method that is inseparable from speculative dialectical ontology.

Some interpreters like Charles Taylor acknowledge that Hegel's discourse about absolute subjectivity is more than mere metaphor, but Taylor dismisses its significance with the comment that nobody believes Hegel's metaphysical doctrine of a cosmic subject anymore.[7] However, Taylor's rejection of absolute subjectivity, like the non-metaphysical view, ignores the fact that the personhood of the absolute is a philosophical doctrine grounded in and part of Hegel's doctrine of the concept—a topic that comprises the entire third division of his tripartite *Wissenschaft der Logik*. Taylor apparently attributes to Hegel a pre-critical metaphysics (which is also the target of Hegel's critique), or something resembling the right-Hegelian interpretation that takes Hegel to be asserting a cosmic subject or transcendent person of classical theism.

This view cannot be maintained in view of Hegel's critique of abstract transcendence in the *Logic*—to wit, that every attempt to separate the infinite from the finite only succeeds in rendering the infinite itself finite—that is, a spurious infinite.[8] The true infinite is a dialectical concept that sublates and incorporates the finite. Thus it resembles neither pantheism (Spinoza's monism of abstract substance) nor theism (dualism) but panentheism, which, in the philosophies of Alfred North Whitehead and Charles Hartshorne, puts forth dipolar, social conceptions of God. In such social conceptions of God, some doctrine of divine personhood is inherent. However, Hegel's "logical personhood" is not to be confused with *a* person or any traditional concept or

[5] *EL* §24; *LProofs*, 104, 99. [6] *PhS* §§17–20.
[7] Charles Taylor, *Hegel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975). [8] *SL* 130 ff.

representation (*Vorstellung*) of a person. On the other hand, it is equally clear that personhood belongs to Hegel's concept of the concept and is not to be dismissed as mere metaphor. For, as we shall see, personhood is essentially connected with and inseparable from his concept of Spirit.

The interpretative situation is further complicated by the fact that there is no consensus interpretation, contemporary or otherwise, of Hegel's *Logic*, *Philosophy of Religion*, or his system as a whole. Moreover, contemporary interpretations of Hegel are puzzling in part because some claim that Hegel can be understood apart from the *Logic*,[9] others claim that the philosophy of religion is exoteric and thus read it out of the system;[10] still others, adhering to the Kantian frame of contemporary philosophy,[11] hold to non-metaphysical readings of Hegel, despite the fact that, in the words of Frederic Beiser, "the metaphysical dimensions of Hegel's thought have proven to be stubbornly irreducible."[12]

Our orientation here is to follow Hegel's mature presentation of his system in his *Encyclopedia*. According to Hegel, "without at least some acquaintance with the concept of the concept . . . nothing can be understood of the nature of God as spirit as such."[13] In the *Encyclopedia Logic*, the dialectic of the concept has three moments or aspects: (1) abstraction (which corresponds to the understanding that isolates and fixes its terms and concepts in isolation, which corresponds roughly to atomism, the myth of the given (Sellars), or what Whitehead calls the fallacy of misplaced concreteness);[14] (2) the dialectical or negatively rational aspect (for example, Kant's transcendental dialectic of reason and the understanding that separates the latter from the former and attacks metaphysics), which places the moments of the concept in opposition; and (3) the speculative or positively rational aspect. These aspects/moments are not three parts of the logic, but rather are moments of everything logically real—that is, of every concept.[15] Hegel's logical method issues immanently in the dialectical unity of concept and reality (the ontological proof) that is neither abstract universal nor abstract transcendent *Jenseits*, but an objective

[9] Allen Wood, *Hegelian Ethical Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 4–6.
[10] *HSL* 27; *KL* 569.
[11] For an account of Kantian frame, cf. Robert Williams, *Tragedy Recognition and the Death of God: Studies in Hegel and Nietzsche* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), chs 1, 6, 7.
[12] Frederick Beiser, "The Puzzling Hegel Renaissance," in F. C. Beiser (ed.), *Cambridge Companion to Hegel and Nineteenth-Century Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 5. Beiser refers to Klaus Hartmann, "Hegel: A Non-Metaphysical View," in A. MacIntyre (ed.), *Hegel: A Collection of Critical Essays* (New York: Anchor Books, Doubleday, 1972; repr. in Klaus Hartmann, *Studies in Foundational Philosophy* (Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi, 1988)), and Robert Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).
[13] *LProofs*, 81.
[14] Alfred North Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World* (New York: Macmillan, 1925).
[15] *EL* §79.

thought or absolute idealism, that which is concrete and actual in and for itself. This concrete universal, constituted through the negation of negation (of the first two moments), supplies the justification of Hegel's concept of category as a unity of thought and being and that is both logical and ontological. Hegel's philosophical doctrine of subjectivity and personhood belongs to his doctrine of the concept, specifically its third affirmatively dialectical moment of singularity, which Hegel characterizes as follows:

> The absolute idea, as the rational concept that in its reality meets only with itself . . . contains within itself the highest opposition. The concept is not merely soul, but free subjective concept that is for itself and therefore possesses personhood, the practical objective determinate concept in and for itself, which, as person, is impenetrable atomic subjectivity, but which nonetheless is *not exclusive singularity*, but explicitly *universality* and *cognition* and in its other has its *own* objectivity for its object. All else is error, confusion, opinion, endeavor, caprice and transitoriness.[16]

This passage introduces three claims: (1) personhood is impenetrable atomic subjectivity—that is, it is for itself; (2) but this atomic subjectivity is nevertheless *not* exclusive singularity, but (3) explicitly universality that in its other has its own objectivity for its object. 'Atomic subjectivity' has an other, and possesses its objectivity in its other and thus is universal singularity. The rest of this chapter is devoted to sorting out these claims as understood through a dialectical analysis of unity in and through difference.

Hegel treats personhood in his *Logic*, *Philosophy of Religion*, and *Philosophy of Right*. The question is how are these vocabularies of personhood related? This question divided Hegel's immediate followers and school into a right wing and a left wing. The right wing (for example, Göschel) asserts that Hegel's God is compatible with classical theism's personal being transcendent to the world—that is, the cosmic monarch of traditional theology, an abstract, pre-worldly person. This interpretation ignores Hegel's logical critique of abstract universality and abstract transcendence, his analysis of the spurious infinite. The left wing asserts that the subject of the logic is human, and that the logic culminates not in a theology of a highest being, but in method or philosophical anthropology. The left wing anticipates the non-metaphysical readings of Hegel that divorce method from ontology. The left holds that personhood is finite; hence absolute spirit is reduced to finite or objective spirit. The left wing criticizes Hegel's combination of logic and metaphysics, seeing in this only the right-Hegelian caricature of abstract transcendence.

As Walter Jaeschke points out, both left and right wing fail as interpretations because both alternatives are reductive of Hegel's actual position—that is, the true infinite; their respective failures in interpretation prove that neither

[16] *SL* 824.

Hegel's *Logic* nor his *Philosophy of Religion* have been understood. This incomprehension has persisted since Hegel's time, partly because of the difficulty of Hegel's thought and system, and partly because philosophical culture has changed. The collapse of the Hegelian School resulted in an anti-metaphysical temperament; philosophical culture reverted to the Kantian or neo-Kantian position that Hegel criticized for being stuck in negative dialectics and spurious infinites. Contemporary non-metaphysical interpretations reflect the ongoing influence, indeed dominance, of the Kantian frame that asserts the primacy of epistemology over ontology.[17] The non-metaphysical interpretations of the *Logic* usually ignore or dismiss the speculative theology and concept of personhood as "mere metaphors," confined to the level of representation (*Vorstellung*) and possessing little or no philosophical significance.[18] What else can Hegel's doctrine of philosophical personhood be, once it is appreciated that in the *Logic* Hegel rejects all metaphysical substrates and concentrates instead simply on the self-movement of the absolute idea, the final infinite form determination in its own totality?[19] Does not Hegel say that "what remains to be considered here is not a content as such, but the universal aspect of its form—that is, the *method*."[20] Does not that mean that the left Hegelians were correct?

On the contrary, Hegel would view the left-Hegelian quasi-Feuerbach position as indistinguishable from the Kantian frame that eclipsed it, as "the doctrine that we can know nothing of God, [which] has become in our time a universally acknowledged truth, a settled matter, a kind of prejudice. . . . it counts as the highest insight that this cognition is not even possible."[21] This "highest insight" is found in the metaphysical skepticism of Kantian philosophy, and in the neo-Kantian repudiation of systematic metaphysics and installation of epistemology as the highest philosophical discipline. Hegel explicitly addresses the anti-theological metaphysical–cultural situation noted above in his opening *Lecture on the Philosophy of Religion*.[22] He wishes to

[17] See Kevin J. Harrelson, "Hegel and the Modern Canon," *Owl of Minerva*, 1–2 (2012–13), 1–35. See Ch 1, Sect. 2, n. 17.

[18] Klaus Hartmann's non-metaphysical interpretation of Hegel construes virtually all of Hegel's theological discourse in the *Logic* as metaphors. "Hegel: A Non-Metaphysical View," in Macintyre (ed.), *Hegel*, 101–24. It is important to keep in mind that Hartmann, who developed the non-metaphysical interpretation while teaching in Texas, developed it in order to make Hegel more palatable within the cognitive constraints imposed by the neo-Kantian framework dominant in Anglo-American philosophy. By bracketing Hegel's metaphysics and theology, Hartmann sought to "change the subject" and to convey the breadth and importance of Hegel's philosophy, focusing on the *Logic* as transcendental ontology, and the social–political *Philosophy of Right*.

[19] *SL* 825. [20] *SL* 825. [21] *LPR* 1. 86–7.

[22] "I wanted to make this cognitive knowledge of God and religion the object of my lectures, because I believe it has never been so important and necessary that this cognition should be taken seriously once more" (*LPR* 1. 86–7). On the issue of the concept and God as its absolute content, cf. Ch. 3, n. 101.

assert that, on the contrary, the idea of God is the absolute content for the concept,[23] and that "what we generally call God . . . is the truth of all things, is the result of the whole of philosophy."[24]

Hegel is not simply preaching to the choir and the faithful. As Dieter Henrich points out, in the *Logic* Hegel both criticizes classical metaphysics and reconstructs it, thereby renewing ontotheology, and that his reconstruction is both indebted to Kant's critique while transcending it. According to Henrich:

> Hegel's apologia for the truth of the ontological proof is at the same time a critique of the previous forms of ontotheology, so much so that it is possible that it surpasses in its incisiveness even Kant's critique. . . . Speculative idealism is not to be taken merely as a late form of traditional metaphysics, because that ignores the fact that it inaugurates a new form of philosophical reflection.[25]

Henrich claims that Hegel's speculative idealism is a critique of traditional metaphysics, not merely a later form of it. Further, Hegel's reconstruction of the ontological argument in the *Logic* is more important for Henrich than his more historical discussions of the argument in his lectures precisely because in the former it is an integral aspect of Hegel's speculative philosophy and dialectic. If the Hegelian category is a unity of thought and being, it is the ontological proof in the *Logic* that constitutes the transition from subjective concept to objectivity that articulates and justifies discursively the Hegelian logic as not merely a doctrine of categories but also a transcendental ontology.

Hegel's reconstruction of the ontological proof addresses a fundamental problem of reason that arises when Kant and his followers (who followed Hume) separate concept and reality, thought and being. "In the a priori synthesis of the concept, Kant possessed a higher principle in which a duality in unity could be cognized, a cognition of what is required for truth. But the material of sense . . . was too strong for him . . . "[26] For Kant a concept is "only a concept," to which Hegel retorts "we must get rid of the 'only'."[27] The expression "only a concept" confuses the concept with subjective representations (*Vorstellung*) that are expressly separated from being or objectivity. But, as we have seen, Hegel declares that "the concept in our sense is not what is ordinarily meant . . . i.e., something opposed to objective reality, something that is not supposed to have being in it. The concept negates its character of being subjective."[28] After all, a "concept without any objectivity is an empty

[23] *LPR* 3. 79. [24] *LPR* 1. 367.
[25] Dieter Henrich, *Der Ontologische Gottesbeweise* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr 1960), 192.
[26] *SL* 591–4.
[27] *LPR* 3. 69. The expression "only a concept" is asserted from the finite standpoint according to which concepts are separate from existence, or, in Kant's terms, concepts without intuitions are empty.
[28] *LPR* 3. 70.

representation or opinion; being without the concept is mere evanescent externality and appearance."[29] The concept for Hegel is an identity in and through difference of thought and being, at once logical and ontological. It is a mistake to say "only a concept." Reading ordinary views of concepts into Hegel's *Logic* in order to caricature and dismiss them is one way to eliminate personhood and speculative theology. However, this not only results in misinterpretation; it also overlooks that Hegel intends to ground the logical concept of personhood in his general doctrine of the concept, which is consummated in the absolute idea, "the free concept that determines itself and in so doing makes itself real."[30] For this reason Hegel asserts "God is not a concept but *the* concept."[31]

Moreover, as we have seen, the unity of concept and objectivity is not an immediate given, but effected in and through negation of negation. This mediated immediacy establishes that the concept for Hegel is an articulated totality, a unity in and through difference, whose actuality is to be "the eternal vision of itself in its other: the concept that has carried itself out in its objectivity, or the object that is inner purposiveness, essential subjectivity."[32] If the concept is inner purposiveness and substance become subject, then the question of personhood cannot be avoided or dismissed as mere metaphor.

That being said, Hegel is clear that self-conscious spirit is not considered in the *Logic*, and that the logical form of the concept is independent of its non-spiritual and of its spiritual shapes.[33] Thus logical personhood is not *a* person, but a shape of the concept, a general ontological structure that remains abstract. Yet the concept is not empty, nor does it depend on pre-given material regarded as an absolute reality independent of the concept. The logical determinations being, essence, and concept provide the ground plan of possibilities for the forms of nature and spirit. The general point is that the reality that the concept gives itself must, in accordance with the requirement of the science, be derived from the concept itself.[34] The concept is self-differentiating; this requires that, in addition to identity, *differentiation* must be regarded as an equally essential moment of the concept.[35] Singularity, *Einzelheit*, the concrete universal, or ground of abstract universality and abstract particularity, is the logical moment in which the concept differentiates and returns to itself, takes possession of itself as a whole—that is, is for itself.[36]

The singularity (*Einzelheit*) of the concept is the locus of the logical concept of personhood. At the very least this is a consciousness of method. However, since for Hegel method is inseparable from ontology, logical life and personhood are the soul of the concrete forms of nature and spirit (*Realphilosophie*). Hegel presses his correction of Kant's formalism beyond Kant's conception of method as formal and external to cognition: "Life, spirit, God, the pure

[29] *LPR* 3. 70. [30] *EL* §213R. [31] *LPR* 3: 71; cf. Ch. 3, n. 101.
[32] *EL* §§213–14. [33] *SL* 586. [34] *SL* 587. [35] *SL* 589. [36] *SL* 620.

concept itself, are beyond the grasp of abstraction, because it deprives its products of singularity, the principle of individuality and personhood . . . "[37] Section 3 of this chapter presents a holistic reading of the singularity of the concept that forms the logical development of a bridge between Hegel's philosophical trinitarianism of the *Logic*, and his theological trinitarianism of the *Philosophy of Spirit* and *Philosophy of Religion*.

1. THE BACKGROUND OF LOGICAL PERSONHOOD: TELEOLOGY AND ORGANISM

Hegel's language about the personhood of the absolute idea, his attribution to it of need, drive (*Trieb*), and purposiveness, presuppose and reflect an organic, holistic model of the absolute idea.[38] Hegel cites and expresses his appreciation for Kant's *Third Critique*, especially Kant's account of teleology and organism; he also criticizes Kant for treating teleology/organism as a merely subjective maxim of judgment, which in his view is subjective idealism.[39] The antinomy of teleological judgment implies that things themselves are contradictory. For Kant, however, this is impossible; contradiction resides, not in the things themselves, but only in our way of thinking and judging. Hegel believes that Kant exhibits a misplaced tenderness towards things.[40] Hegel remarks on the irony that, while for Kant it would be a pity if things contradicted themselves, it is not a pity at all that the mind should be a contradiction. Kant treats dialectic and contradiction as purely negative, symptomatic not only of metaphysical illusion, but also of mental derangement and disorder.[41]

In his *Aesthetics* Hegel proposes the following rejoinder to Kant's view of contradiction:

> to say that opposites are to be identical is precisely contradiction itself. *Yet whoever claims that nothing exists which carries in itself a contradiction in the form of an identity of opposites is at the same time requiring that nothing living shall exist. For the power of life, and still more the might of the spirit, consists precisely in positing contradiction in itself, enduring it, and overcoming it.* This positing and resolving of the contradiction between the ideal unity and the real separatedness of the members constitutes the constant process of life, and life *is* only by being a *process*.

[37] *SL* 619. [38] *EL* §§50–1, 192–3, 204. See Ch. 3, Sects 5 and 6.

[39] See Hegel's appreciative remarks on Kant's recovery of Aristotle's entelechy (inner purposiveness) in *EL* §55 and *Aesthetics*, vol. 1; for his criticism of Kant's subjectivizing of mechanism and teleology as maxims of judgment, see *EL* §60 and *SL* 737–9.

[40] *EL* §48; cf. *LProofs*, 158. [41] *LHP* 3. 451; see also *Commentary*.

> The process of life comprises a double activity: on the one hand, that of bringing steadily into existence perceptibly the real differences of all the members and specific characteristics of the organism, but, on the other hand, that of asserting in them their universal ideality (which is their animation) if they try to persist in independent severance from one another and isolate themselves in fixed differences from one another. *This is the idealism of life. For philosophy is not at all the only example of idealism; nature, as life, already makes a matter of fact what idealist philosophy brings to completion in its own spiritual field.*[42]

This passage conveys the link between the concept and the positing and resolving of contradiction constitutive of vital processes in Hegel's neo-Aristotelian concept of organized life as a dialectical unity in and through difference. The whole is immanent in and organizes its members, while yet remaining itself and reproducing itself in them. In this teleological process the end is the self-production and maintenance of the whole itself. Thus Kant's *Third Critique* points the way to an important discovery—to wit, that

> end . . . is the concrete universal, which possesses in its own self the moment of particularity and externality and is therefore active and the urge to repel itself from itself. . . . [However,] the end relation is more than *judgment*; it is the *syllogism* of the self-subsistent free concept that unites itself with itself through objectivity.[43]

This appreciation suggests a further point of agreement with Kant (within his disagreement). Earlier we saw, in their treatment of the cosmological and teleological arguments, both Kant and Hegel identify a natural logic (the idealism of life) that spontaneously but unconsciously predelineates the field investigated in transcendental logic. Kant charges this natural logic with error and sophism, yet acknowledges that it is a vision of the organic–reciprocal interconnectedness of things to which the mind spontaneously returns even after its "critical refutation." Hegel views the task of speculative logic as not only to criticize, but also to correct and to defend, this natural logic by holding fast to and sublating its contradictory elements into a higher, more concrete unity—in short, doing at the conceptual level what living nature and spirit themselves do. The above passage also implies that, while nature and spirit are distinct spheres, they are both vital domains characterized by a positing—and resolving—of contradiction. Hegel holds that contradiction and its resolution moves the world.[44] To grasp this fundamental vision is to get some appreciation for the broad outlines of Hegel's doctrine of the concept. For Hegel, the concept is not merely subjective; it is an infinite activity that both posits and resolves contradictions, determining itself as a unity in and through difference, unconsciously in nature, with consciousness of itself in speculative logic.

[42] *Aesthetics*, 1. 120; emphasis added. [43] *SL* 739. [44] *EL* §119Z, 2.

The positing and resolving of contradiction corresponds to judgment and syllogism (respectively) as phases and activities of the concept.

This positing and resolving of contradiction culminates in the absolute idea as the unity of concept and objectivity. This unity is truth in the deeper sense of objectivity, not as opposed to, but rather identical with, the concept—that is, the realization of the concept.[45] This means that "all the relationships of the understanding are contained in the idea, but in their infinite self-return and self-identity"[46]—to wit, the idea is the affirmative vital resolution of the antinomies posited by the understanding. Or, "reason can employ all the relationships of the understanding, but only insofar as it destroys the forms of the understanding."[47] Contradiction is not simply destructive of relationship, but also creative and productive of relationship. Hegel's *Logic* is an example of such deconstruction of the categories of the understanding that reconstructs them in speculative, dialectical, affirmative teleology. Hegel describes it thus:

> It can therefore be said of the teleological activity that in it the end is the beginning, the consequent the ground, the effect the cause, that it is a becoming of what has already become, that in it only what already exists comes into existence, and so forth. This means that in general all the determinations of relationships belonging to the sphere of reflection or immediate being have lost their distinctions, and what was enunciated as an other, such as end, consequent, effect etc., no longer has in the [realized] end relation the determination of an other, but on the contrary is posited as identical with the simple concept as an [articulated] whole.[48]

The doctrine of the concept occupies the entire third part of the *Science of Logic*. A commentary on this is beyond our present task.[49] We must be content with an outline of Hegel's position, following the simplified version presented in the *Encyclopedia Logic*. As Hegel there explains, the general doctrine of the concept is objective idealism and holism. The concept is a vital interconnectedness and articulated totality, an organized determinate unity in difference or system. Thus each of the moments of the concept is the whole concept. The doctrine of the concept includes the concept in its narrower, more customary sense—to wit, the subjective concept. In subjective concept Hegel presents his theory of judgment (*Urteil*) or diremption, followed by the syllogism as the negation of the negation (that is, of the diremption).

[45] *EL* §213. [46] *EL* §214R. [47] *LPR* 3. 192.

[48] *SL* 748. Later we will see that Hegel expresses this more simply in theological language: "God who differentiates himself . . . remains identical in the process [of differentiation]" (*LPR* 3. 192).

[49] My interpretation of this material is indebted to *IHL*; Harris, *Formal, Transcendental and Dialectical Thinking: Logic and Reality* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1987); Stephen Houlgate, *The Opening of Hegel's Logic* (West Lagayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2006); *HSL*; *HILH*.

Second, as we have seen, the doctrine of the concept is a reconstructed ontological proof consisting in the development/transition from the subjective concept to objectivity. Objectivity is no longer *other* than or simply *opposed* to the concept, but rather the self-realization of the concept. As we have seen, Hegel's reconstruction of the ontological proof is a speculative re-enactment of the absolute idea's own ontological proof—namely, the fulfillment and satisfaction of the drive towards self-actualization that removes from the subjective concept the status being only subjective—that is, the concept makes itself actual, and produces the affirmative moment of the dialectic.[50]

The issue of the personhood of the concept emerges in the third moment of the general concept, the moment of affirmative dialectic—to wit, singularity. The concept has three moments: (1) abstract universality, (2) abstract particularity (*Besonderheit*) opposed to (1), and (3) singularity (*Einzelheit*), which reconciles abstract universality and abstract particularity, by particularizing the universal and universalizing the particular, and is their ground. The singularity (*Einzelheit*) of the concept constitutes the concrete, determinate universal, the determinate determinate that actualizes itself through negation of negation. It must be emphasized that numbering and counting the moments of the concept is misleading and inappropriate because counting separates the moments. Hegel observes that

> number, since it has the unit [*das Eine*] for its principle, converts them as counted into completely isolated and mutually indifferent determinations. . . . The truth is that the different determinate concepts, far from falling apart into number, are simply only one and the same concept.[51]

Further, while every moment of the concept is itself the whole concept, "*singularity, the subject*, is the concept *posited* as totality."[52] Singularity is the subjectivity/personhood that overgrasps and posits the concept as totality for itself.[53]

For Hegel, personhood, including the personhood of the absolute, is a necessary aspect of the self-determining, self-specifying, self-actualizing concept—to wit, its singularity, that is, its concrete universality.[54] Just as Hegel's reconstruction of the ontological argument seeks to combat and overcome logical formalism,[55] so also his logical concept of singularity—the personhood of the concept—is a continuation of this same critique of abstract rationalism and formalism. The progression of the logical categories runs from abstract (that is, pure being) to concrete (that is, absolute idea). The abstract

[50] *EL* §§81–2. [51] *SL* 612–13. [52] *EL* §163R.

[53] *EL* §215. I follow H. S. Harris in translating *übergreifen* as "overgrasp." Its opposite is "one-sided."

[54] *SL* 577–621; *EL* §§160–5; the doctrine of the concept anticipates and is included in the absolute idea.

[55] *SL* 707–8.

categories are the simplest, most immediate; the later categories are higher, more mediated and thus more concrete. Since the starting point of the *Logic* is abstract, it is not yet the absolute, or, the absolute only implicitly. What is fully concrete is a self-mediated immediacy—that is, self-actualized. Singularity—that is, concrete universality—is the reconciliation of universality and particularity; however, singularity is not a merely *dependent* result, but surpasses its abstract beginning as the true ground that overgrasps and posits its conditions and presuppositions.[56] The personhood of the concept is the self- developing ground and telos into which all its determinations and conditions return.[57] According to Hegel, the singularity of the concept posits the concept as a whole and resolves its immanent contradictions. This resolution constitutes logical personhood. The personhood of the concept is the concept as fully concrete, its actualization. "It is essentially only spirit that can comprehend the concept as concept; for this is not merely the property of spirit, but spirit's pure self."[58]

2. FROM SUBSTANCE TO SUBJECT TO PERSONHOOD: HEGEL ON SPINOZA

The doctrine of the concept in the *Science of Logic* includes Hegel's criticism of Spinoza and Kant,[59] and his renewal of the ontological proof and ontotheology. Spinoza's philosophy also includes a defense of the ontological proof, but it begins and ends with the absolute as substance. However, in Hegel's view, Spinoza's philosophy actually begins with the positing and resolution of a contradiction. Hegel interprets Spinoza's absolute as *causa sui*—that is, as both cause and effect. This means that identity and difference are present in substance simultaneously. But, if that is true, then the absolute cannot simply be substance, for substance does not contradict itself or support antinomy. Substance cannot be the highest idea of metaphysics. It can be only a subordinate category that is *aufgehoben*, negated, combined with another and preserved on higher level. Hegel's claim that substance is subject has the sense of a resolution of an antinomy or a contradiction, and the result is a new, higher concept—to wit, spirit. Thus substance metaphysics is transcended in Hegel's concept of absolute spirit.[60]

Hegel's doctrine of the concept differs from Kant in that dialectic does not result in self-subversion, metaphysical illusion, or in merely regulative

[56] *EL* §215. [57] *EL* §§214–15. [58] *SL* 618. [59] *SL* 577–96.

[60] Hans-Christian Lucas, "Spinoza, Hegel, Whitehead," in George Lucas Jr (ed.), *Hegel and Whitehead: Contemporary Perspectives in Systematic Philosophy* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press 1986), 39–60.

principles,[61] but rather in affirmative contradiction that constitutes an articulated whole or totality. In explaining the surpassing of substance by subject, necessity by freedom, Hegel writes that the truth of necessity is freedom, and the truth of substance is the concept. In each case there is an emergence of the more perfect from the less perfect.[62] This constitutes the transition to the concept—to wit, the emergence of the "I," the subjectivity that overgrasps (*übergreifen*), posits and sublates its presuppositions and conditions. This emergent free subjectivity, as the telos and the actuality of the concept, anchors Hegel's concepts of singularity and personhood in his doctrine of the concept.

Hegel contrasts his view with Spinoza. Substance is the principle of Spinoza's philosophy. What Spinoza says about substance is not false, for substantial necessity is a necessary standpoint assumed by the absolute. To that extent it is perfectly true, but it is not the highest standpoint.[63] It is the absolute in the still restricted form of necessity.[64] Hegel believes that, while God is absolute necessity, God is also absolute person.[65] Spinoza's absolute is veiled necessity, impersonal, and thus inadequate.[66] Nevertheless, Hegel credits Spinoza with beginning the unveiling of substance, and this unveiling is the genesis of the concept in Hegel's sense.[67]

We find one clue to what Hegel means by the unveiling of substance when he writes concerning Spinoza: "When one begins to philosophize one must first be a Spinozist. . . . *The negation of everything determinate and particular, to which every philosopher must come, is the liberation of spirit and its absolute foundation.*"[68] Hegel finds in Spinoza the speculative negation of finitude that empiricist and rationalist philosophies of finitude pass over. Spinoza is a speculative philosopher for Hegel because he breaks with immediate sense-certainty that naively ascribes genuine being to finitude—for example, only the sensible is "real" (and ideas are merely subjective). Hegel traces this conviction to empiricism.[69] It is a conviction rooted in the immediacy of the senses, one that proved irresistible to Kant when he sided with Hume and, owing to an excessive tenderness toward things, determined that contradiction and dialectic are merely subjective, symptomatic of illusion.[70] In Hegel's estimation, Spinoza's refusal to accord veritable being to finitude—that is, the sensibly

[61] *SL* 589–90. [62] *EL* §159. [63] *SL* 580. [64] *EL* §151Z.
[65] *EL* §151Z. [66] *SL* 537. [67] *SL* 581.
[68] Hegel, *Geschichte der Philosophie*, in *Werke*, 20. 165; emphasis added.
[69] *EL* §§47, 39. The cosmological argument, as interpreted by Jacobi, treats the "solid reality of finitude" as the point of departure for the inference to God's existence. Because the finite *is*, God also is. This interpretation appears to make God dependent on finitude. While Hegel agrees with Spinoza's view that only the infinite is real, he also criticizes Spinoza's development of this position as acosmic (*EL* §151Z). Hegel seeks to thread the needle between traditional ontological dualism and Spinoza's acosmic monism.
[70] *SL* 589–94; on Kant's denial of objective contradiction out of a misplaced tenderness for things, cf. *EL* §48.

given—and instead grasping finitude as relative to absolute substance and necessity, are the principal feature that makes Spinoza's philosophy genuinely speculative and profoundly religious.[71] The speculative kernel in Spinoza's philosophy is its counterintuitive negation of everything determinate and particular. Spinoza stands for liberation from finitude by demonstrating that finitude is not self-existent, but rather exists through an other—to wit, absolute substance. Recognition of this dependence is liberating; "the highest independence of the human being is to know himself as totally determined by the absolute idea; this is the consciousness and attitude that Spinoza calls *amor intellectualis dei*."[72]

Substance is unveiled here to this extent:

> terms that appear initially to be bound together (e.g, cause–effect) are not in fact alien to one another. Instead they are moments of one whole, each of which, being related to the other, is at home with itself and goes together with itself. This is the transfiguration of necessity into freedom, and freedom is now not just the abstract freedom of abstract negation, but concrete and positive freedom instead.[73]

But for Spinoza necessity is not yet freedom in Hegel's sense, because Spinoza's substance is not yet subject—that is, it remains sheer necessity, abstract, incomprehensible and impersonal. "The great intuition of Spinoza's substance is the liberation from finitude, but only implicitly,"[74] because Spinoza fails to grasp subjectivity and subjective freedom, the "I"—that is, the concept.[75]

This defect in Spinoza's abstract substance pervades most of his philosophy, which is abstract, quasi-mathematical, and objectivist:

> Thoughts form the content, but they are not self-conscious thoughts or concepts: the content signifies thought as pure abstract consciousness, but an unreasoning knowledge into which the individual does not enter; the content has not the signification of the "I". Therefore the case is as in mathematics; a proof is certainly given, conviction must follow, but yet the matter fails to be understood. There is a rigid necessity in the proof, to which the moment of self-consciousness is lacking; the "I" disappears, gives itself up, merely withers away. Spinoza's procedure is . . . correct; yet the individual proposition is false, because it expresses only one side of the negation.[76]

[71] *EL* §50R. In his defense of Spinoza against the charge of pantheism, Hegel points out that we ascribe religion to peoples who worship apes, the cow, statues, etc., as God. "At the very least, a philosophy which maintains that God, and only God, *is*, should not be passed off as atheism." Rather Spinoza's thought is acosmism, which defrauds the difference of its due (*EL* §§50, 151Z).

[72] *EL* §158Z.

[73] *EL* §158Z. For abstract freedom and negation, cf. *PR* §§5–7.

[74] *EL* §159R.

[75] Hegel criticizes Spinoza for introducing the concept of substance as an immediate truth, rather than deriving it dialectically from its mediation. Of course, for Spinoza nothing is prior to substance as *causa sui*. However, for Hegel, "the absolute cannot be a first, an immediate; on the contrary, the absolute is essentially a result" (*SL* 537).

[76] *LHP* 3. 286; cf. *SL* 53.

This last point applies to Hegel's critique of so-called First Principles (*Grundsätze*). A first principle, such as "the absolute is substance" or "the absolute is subject," even if true, is, as immediately asserted, false as it stands, because it is one-sided. As one-sided it may be controverted by an opposite principle that is likewise immediately certain and asserted.[77] Not until the putative "first principle" comes on the scene as a reflection from and an incorporation of an opposite immediate certainty does it count for something more than a mere assertion. Moreover, a successful refutation of the opposite certainty must be immanent in its own self-understanding and would consist in a further development of both principles that overcomes their defects, including one-sidedness.[78] Spinoza's philosophy is the beginning, but only the beginning of the unveiling of substance, which does not determine itself, but rather undergoes only external negation and limitation. Regarded from the standpoint of its geometrical–mathematical method, Spinoza's philosophy remains abstract, objectivist, acosmic, a view from nowhere.

While he praises Spinoza's speculative negation of finitude that stands empiricism on its head, Hegel nevertheless criticizes Spinoza's theory of negation: *omnis determinatio est negatio*.[79] Hegel interprets the latter as an external negation that Spinoza leaves unexplained and consequently fails to integrate with his theory of absolute substance. Put simply, absolute substance does not negate itself. Spinoza's substance is not only immediately assumed or defined at the outset; it also lacks the infinite form of negation or negation of negation.[80] It is true that substance is supposed to be the absolute unity of thought and being or extension; it includes thought, but only in unity with extension, rather than separating itself from extension as a determining and formative activity.[81] Moreover, substance is not a movement that originates from itself and that returns to itself. "Two consequences follow from this: one is that *Spinoza's substance lacks the principle of personhood*, a defect that has been the main cause of hostility to Spinoza's system; the other is that cognition is external reflection."[82] Lacking the infinite form of negation, Spinoza's metaphysics lacks personhood, spirituality, and freedom. In his *History of Philosophy Lectures* Hegel elaborates:

> Because negation was conceived by Spinoza merely in one-sided fashion, there is . . . an utter blotting out of the principle of subjectivity, individuality, personhood, the moment of self-consciousness . . . Thought has only the signification of the universal, not of self-consciousness.[83]

Consequently, Spinoza's substance is the abstract universal and abstract identity in which all differences and determinacies disappear:

[77] *PhS* §§23–4. [78] *PhS* §234. [79] *SL* 536–7. [80] *SL* 536–7.
[81] *SL* 536–7. [82] *SL* 536–7; emphasis added. [83] *LHP* 3. 287.

> All differences and determinations of things and of consciousness simply go back into the one substance, one may say that in the system of Spinoza all things are merely cast down into this abyss of annihilation, but from this abyss, nothing comes out. . . . What we find regarding the particular is that it is only a modification of absolute substance. . . . The moment of negativity lacking to this rigid motionlessness, whose single form of activity is this, to divest all things of their determination and particularity and cast them back into the one absolute substance, wherein they are simply swallowed up and all life . . . is utterly destroyed.[84]

Spinoza's metaphysics is acosmic because it defrauds the difference of its due.[85] Spinoza's metaphysics is inconsistent with his philosophy of religion, above all his *amor intellectualis dei,* insofar as the love of humans for God would seem to disappear into God's love for godself—*if* Spinoza's God can be coherently said to love himself.

To illustrate the problem here, Hegel distinguishes between the abstract proposition, "the absolute is subject," and its actual meaning. In the proposition, the subject is immediately assumed as an inert, fixed point, to which predicates are attached by a knower of this subject, but this attachment of predicate to the subject is not grounded in a movement of the absolute itself; it is merely subjective, valid only for another, external standpoint. "Hence the mere anticipation that the absolute is subject is not only *not* the actuality of this concept, but it even makes the actuality *impossible*. For the anticipation posits the subject as a *fixed, inert point*, whereas the *actuality is self-movement*."[86] This self-opposing, self-moving actuality is precisely what Hegel finds lacking in Spinoza's abstract substance.

In contrast, Hegel's absolute is self-determining—substance becomes subject—and this means that determinateness is not something external or foreign to the absolute, but rather its own inner telos, its own self-manifestation and self-specifying expression. Hegel inverts Spinoza's "determination is negation" to "negation is determination."[87] Hegel's absolute, as living, determines itself by negating itself, opposing itself to itself and transforming this opposition into a higher, richer, more determinate, and concrete unity. Hegel's concept of infinite negation requires reconceiving the absolute as self-determining subject, rather than abstract, impersonal substance.

[84] *LHP* 3. 288. Cf. *EL* §160Z, Hegel's remarks on the concept at the conclusion of the *Zusatz*.

[85] *EL* §151Z. While he criticizes Spinoza's method as objectivist and his philosophy as acosmic, he also defends Spinoza against the charge of atheism. He comments that a philosophy that maintains that God and only God is should not be passed off as atheism, and that, although it is not to their credit, people find a denial of God more intelligible and plausible than a denial of the world (*EL* §§50R).

[86] *PhS* §23; translation modified; emphasis added. Note that Hegel's contrast between abstract substance and self-moving actuality reflects the organic model discussed in Sect. 1.

[87] *LPR* 1. 427.

Moreover, the absolute has to be conceived and understood this way because it *has developed itself* from abstract static substance into self-moving subject.

Further, the absolute cannot be defined into existence, or assumed as a first principle immediately at the outset of the science: "the absolute cannot be a first, an immediate; on the contrary, the absolute is essentially *its result*."[88] This crucial point distinguishes Hegel from traditional foundationalist metaphysics. Hegel's logic begins not with the absolute, but with a beginning that is other than the absolute, yet endowed with a drive to surpass itself.

> Hence it may indeed be said that every beginning must be made with the absolute, just as all advance is merely the exposition of it, insofar as its *in-itself* is the concept. But because the absolute is at first only *in-itself* it equally is not the absolute or the posited concept, and also not the idea; for what characterizes these is precisely the fact that in them the *in-itself* is only an abstract one-sided moment. Hence the advance is not superfluous; but it would be superfluous if that with which the beginning was made were in truth already the absolute; the advance consists rather in the universal determining itself and being *for itself* the universal, that is, equally an individual and a subject. Only in its consummation is it the absolute.[89]

Hegel's *Logic* begins with the category of being—that is, becoming—the first concrete thought.[90] The logic concludes with the realized concept or absolute idea, which includes the positedness of all its determinations. "It is the idea for which, being what is absolutely first (in the method), this end is at the same time only the vanishing of the semblance that the beginning is something immediate, and the idea is a result. This is the cognition that the idea is the one totality."[91] Thus the category of being is not the absolute idea, but *other than the absolute*; yet its difference from the concept or absolute is posited by the absolute itself.

Hegel's absolute is self-negating and self-determining; its determinations are its own self-specifications. Hegel writes:

> As negativity in general or in accordance with the first, immediate negation, the universal contains determinateness as particularity; as the second negation—that is, as negation of negation—it is absolute determinateness, or individuality and concreteness. The universal is thus the totality of the concept; it is concrete and far from being empty.[92]

Because it is self-differentiating, Hegel's universal is not abstract indeterminacy, but rather is present in each of its moments or differences; this immanence of the whole in its members not only differentiates them, but also unites them by

[88] *LHP* 3. 286 (1840); emphasis in original. In *PhS* Hegel puts the point thus: a so-called basic proposition (*Grundsatz*) or principle of philosophy, if true, is also false, just because it is only a principle. Knowledge is actual, and can be expounded only as an articulated totality, i.e., as science or system, that includes a negation of the initial one-sidedness of its principle (*PhS* §24).
[89] *SL* 829. [90] *EL* §88Z. [91] *EL* §242. [92] *SL* 603–4.

generating vital contradictions that propel the life-process forward and prevent the differences from becoming fixed and isolated. This immanent, self-negating power is the creative power of the concept.[93]

Thus, in the concept, determinateness is not a limit, as though the concept were related to something beyond it; on the contrary, determinateness is the native immanent movement of the universal—its self-specification. In the second moment of the concept, to wit, particularity [*Besonderheit*], the universal is not in the presence of an *opaque other*, but in the presence of itself. It is at home with itself in its other.[94] The universal is the substance of the particulars, and each particular species has the same universal as the other particulars to which it is *related*.[95] But at the same time, since the particular species are identical in their corresponding universal, their diversity is as such likewise universal—that is, it is *totality*. The particular therefore not only contains the universal, but through its determinateness also *exhibits* it.

This immanence of the whole in its members prepares the next step in Hegel's analysis—to wit, a consideration of the relation of the understanding to reason in the transition to the third phase of the concept—that is, singularity (*Einzelheit*). The understanding isolates, abstracts, and fixes its terms in isolation, and takes them as true in isolation. The understanding renders finitude fixed and absolute; but in so doing it falls into dualism, opposition, and atomism. The understanding subverts itself. A reason that followed the understanding and accepted its fixed negation would be subjectively *impotent*. Nevertheless, the understanding has an important role to play in the dialectic and that is why Hegel holds that it is an error either to separate the understanding from reason or to elevate it above reason.

Hegel explains that the negative power that isolates things and dissolves them, properly belongs to the concept which is self-relating universality.[96] The understanding gives things a rigidity and isolation that they do not possess in the qualitative sphere and sphere of reflection—to wit, the *form of reflection-into-self that cuts them off from all relation to other*.[97] However this abstract isolation is not entirely negative; rather it allows us to *plumb the depths of the difference*.[98] This plumbing of the depths of difference is not simply negative,

[93] *SL* 605.

[94] *SL* 605; Hegel's examples: the genus is unaltered in its species; the species are different not from the universal but *only from one another* (*SL* 606).

[95] Note: the concrete universal is therefore at the same time a theory of relations, double transition, and holism—an articulated whole or totality that essentially requires both identity and difference.

[96] *WL* 6. 287; *SL* 611.

[97] *WL* 6. 286; *SL* 610; emphasis added. Cf. Husserl's *Crisis*, the concept of mathematization of the plena that downgrades the life-world as merely subjective-relative, and leads to the identification of reality with mathematical models and constructs. Hegel believes that such mathematization involves an abstraction of terms from their context and isolates them from relation to others.

[98] *WL* 6. 286; *SL* 610.

but affirmative. It allows reason to correct the understanding by spiritually impregnating finite forms so that at this extreme point they acquire the capability to dissolve themselves and to pass over into their opposite.[99] Specifically, Hegel says it is "form, spiritually impregnated, in which the finite, through the universality in which it relates itself to itself, *spontaneously catches fire, posits itself as dialectical, and therefore is the beginning of the manifestation of reason.*"[100] The *Begriff* has the power of infinite negation, the negation of negation, which both dissolves the finite (that is, in the rigid, self-enclosed form imparted to it by the understanding) and, plumbing its difference, preserves it by transfiguring it and incorporating it as transfigured into vital union with itself.

According to Hegel, difference receives its due in the determinate *Begriff*, since it is through the plumbing of difference that the transition from finite opposition and contradiction to union with infinite is effected and the concept becomes actual as determinate or concrete universality. The determinate universal is a self-related determinateness; it is the determinate determinateness or absolute negativity posited for itself. This self-related determinateness is not *particularity* (*Besonderheit*) (*which is opposed to the abstract universal*) but rather *singularity* (*Einzelheit*), the "determinate determinate"; such singularity is concrete universality, the third phase of the *Begriff*. Hegel writes: "The singularity [*Einzelheit*] of the concept is strictly what is effective—and it no longer works like a cause with the semblance of producing something else: rather *it is what produces itself*.... Every moment of the concept is itself the whole concept, but *singularity, the subject*, is the concept *posited* as totality."[101]

Einzelheit, as overgrasping self-liberating subjectivity, opens a new issue, the issue of abstraction. Hegel finds yet another occasion to criticize the abstract universal.

> Abstraction lets drop the particularity and fails to plumb the difference to its depths. Instead, abstraction ascends higher and becomes ever more destitute of content. Abstraction does not have singularity [*Einzelheit*] within itself. Consequently, abstraction remains destitute of the concept. But the singularity such abstraction despises is the profundity in which the concept seizes itself and is posited as concept.[102]

Hegel claims that life, spirit, God—the pure concept itself—are beyond the grasp of abstraction and the understanding, because abstraction deprives its products of *singularity* (*Einzelheit*), which is the principle of individuality,

[99] *SL* 610–11.

[100] *WL* 6. 288; *SL* 612. The fire imagery is a reference to Heraclitus, about whom Hegel boasts that there is not a single proposition of Heraclitus that is not included in his *Logic* (*Geschichte der Philosophie*, in *Werke*, 18. 320).

[101] *EL* §163R; emphasis added.

[102] *WL* 6. 297; *SL* 619.

subjectivity, and *Persönlichkeit*, and so arrives at nothing else but universalities devoid of life and spirit.[103]

Before addressing the concept of the personhood of the absolute idea, we need to clarify an obscure but important distinction Hegel makes between *immediate singularity* and the *universal singularity* (of the concept).[104] Hegel is clear that the principle of personhood is universality.[105] But what universality? It is not abstract or immediate universality; rather it is the mediated, determinate universal singularity of the concept, the true infinite. Consequently, the personhood of the concept is *not* the immediate singularity of abstract particularity (*Besonderheit*), but rather universal singularity (*Einzelheit*). What is involved in this distinction are the issues of determinacy and mediation. Consequently, an examination and clarifications of the logical antecedents of the subjectivity and singularity of the concept are necessary—namely, the something (*Etwas*), and the dialectic of something and other.[106] For Hegel is not a monist, but a trinitarian, not a philosopher of the subject, but a philosopher of spirit.

3. THE LOGICAL BEGINNING OF THE SUBJECT: SOMETHING AND OTHER

In the section on determinate being (*Dasein*), the dialectical analysis of the category of the something (*Etwas*) is a movement away from, and a sublation of, abstract universality and generality.[107] The analysis of the "something" includes the first infinite negation or negation of negation in the *Logic*. As such, it is the logically primitive beginning of the subject as being-in-itself (*Insichsein*). The something is the subject in a reduced, abstract sense—that is:

> as simple self-relation in the form of being. Determinate being, life, thought and so on essentially determine themselves to become a determinate being, a living creature, a thinker (ego) and so on. This process of determination is of utmost importance, if we are not to remain with such generalities as existence, life in general, thought in general, or with divinity instead of God.[108]

[103] *WL* 6. 297; *SL* 619.

[104] He makes this distinction in both *EL* §163 and *PR* §7.

[105] *EL* §§163Z.

[106] In Hegel's discussion of the singularity of the concept, he recapitulates the previous dialectic of determinate being—something and the other, and the one and the many (*SL* 618–21), that culminate in totality. As we will shortly see, he refers to the singularity of the concept as the logical development of determinate being as negation of negation in his discussion of the something and the other (*SL* 115–16).

[107] This sublation of abstraction in determinate unity is carried out in the logic of Singularity (*SL* 616–21).

[108] *SL* 115.

However, here the something's simple self-relation in the form of being is not immediate, but involves a negation of negation—which involves the power of the something to maintain itself in otherness, relation, and so on. Hegel explains:

> the negative of the negative is, as *something*, only the beginning of the subject—*being-within-self*, only as yet quite indeterminate. It determines itself further on, first, as a *being-for-self*, and so on, until in the *concept* it first attains the concrete intensity of the *subject*. At the base of all these determinations lies the *negative unity with itself*.[109]

The "intensity" of the subject/concept is its singularity (*Einzelheit*) and personhood. The logical genesis of the "something" is not simply negation, but rather negation of negation. This primitive self-mediation results in being-within-self, or elementary, immediate *being-for-self*, which *could* be the "immediate singularity" that Hegel criticizes.[110]

However, as Hegel continues to explore determinate being as "the something," *another* "something" suddenly "erupts" on the logical scene—namely, the other. That is, the simple self-relation or being-in-itself is only part of the story; self-relation is contextualized and asserted "against its being-for-other."[111] Hegel writes: "In something we at once hit upon the other, and we know there is not only something but also something else."[112] Stephen Houlgate explains:

> The paradox that Hegel uncovers in the something is that the something's own logical structure requires that it must also take the form of, and be accompanied by, that which is other than itself. For Hegel . . . there is never just something by itself with nothing else besides. There is always something and an other.[113]

[109] *SL* 115; emphasis added. [110] *EL* §163R; *PR* §7R+Z.
[111] *SL* 116. [112] *EL* §92Z.
[113] Houlgate, *The Opening of Hegel's Logic*, 321–3. Cf. *HSL* 17 (*KL* 365): "It is Hegel's contention that the impossibility of explaining a primitive formal element by itself, without making use of others . . . is due to an ontological interconnectedness such that the elements are not only not individually conceivable but do not exist independently of each other." This is the crucial point that establishes Hegel's philosophical trinitarianism and connects it with his theological trinitarianism. Michelet overlooks this in his formulation that God is the universal personhood as such (see Ch. 4, Sect. 3, n. 35). Michelet tends to see the absolute subject in Hegel's logic as a monist concept that does not accord with Hegel's philosophical or theological trinitarianism and holism. He overlooks Hegel's recapitulation of the dialectic of determinate being—something and other—in his analysis of the determinate concept. *SL* 115–16, 618–21. See also Ch. 4, pp. 160–8, Michelet's discussion of repulsion and attraction. Hegel returns to this issue of determinacy in his 1827 Lectures (*LPR* 3. 371–5, 379–80). Hegel writes that, while unity abides, it also continually becomes more determinate. Where monism suppresses the difference, determinate unity requires the difference as much as unity.

That is, the something *is only as doubled*; the something is *both* irreducible to and yet *inseparable* from its other that doubles it.[114] Something and *other* are other than each other, yet these are, in their difference, nevertheless inseparable. Identity in its determinate sense (*Dasein, Etwas*) implies difference (*Andersheit*), and difference (*Andersheit*) in its determinate sense (*Andere*) implies identity in and through difference (*Etwas–Andere*).

Doubling is the differentiation of the concept. *Differentiation* implies an opposite movement of return, which establishes a two-sided *relation*—to wit, of the differentiated (elements). Conversely, relation, which is genuine only if double-sided, mutual, and reciprocal, implies holism, articulated differentiation, and totality. Hegel shows that *Etwas* and *Andere* are a dyad that form a *totality*, a unity in and through difference. The question here is whether the logical descendants (or, strictly speaking, the more concrete logical successors) of the something—to wit, subjectivity and personhood—can be understood adequately as restricted to or exhausted by immediate, isolated subjects, individuals, or atomic units, that exist apart from relation and connection (*Zusammenhang*) with any other. Hegel believes these cannot be so restricted or reduced: The "I (ego) is *both* simple self-relation and *utterly relation to an other*."[115] In view of the dialectic of the something: the *aliud . . . aliud*, or "the one . . . and the other," the subjectivity and personhood of the concept must be understood in terms of doubling. *Doubling* implies *relation*, and, since relation is inherently reciprocal, each is related to and united with the other in and through the difference. This unity in and through difference is an articulated *totality*.

So much for a quick overview of what is fundamental and essential, not only in Hegel's dialectic of unity, but also in his anti-solipsistic, intersubjective conception of the subject. Hegel points out that none of the foregoing analysis is intelligible to the non-dialectical understanding that separates as it counts:

[114] In employing the concept of doubling here Hegel is in good company: consider Plato's indefinite dyad, Aristotle's concept of friendship, which includes the concept of the friend as another oneself. Or consider Husserl's concept of doubling as constitutive of appresentation in his account of intersubjectivity in the fifth *Cartesian Meditation*. Husserl was never able to make his concept of doubling clear within his methodological commitments to transcendental philosophy as egology. There is a long tradition of reading transcendental idealism as a monism of subjectivity, which emphasizes its continuities with the All–One doctrine found most notably in Spinoza. In criticism of this tradition, Houlgate aptly comments that "Hegel is clearly not a monist in any straightforward sense" (*The Opening of Hegel's Logic*, 323). Moreover, Hegel's view is that Kant's transcendental idealism ended the metaphysics of the understanding and imposed a methodological monism of the philosophy of the subject (*LHP* 3. 427). However, it need not imply such monism and abstract identity. "Kant's notion of synthetic a priori judgements—the notion of something differentiated which equally is inseparable, *of an identity which is in its own self an inseparable difference*, belongs to what is great and imperishable in his philosophy" (*SL* 209; emphasis added).

[115] *EL* §143Z; emphasis added.

> For the principle of the understanding is abstract identity . . . not concrete identity. . . . According to abstract identity, the one and the other are independent, each for itself, yet at the same time are related to each other. This is what is called inconceivable. The resolution of the contradiction is the concept, a resolution which the understanding does not attain because it starts from the presupposition that the two distinguished moments both *are* and *remain* utterly independent of each other. . . . What appears inconceivable is precisely the concept itself.[116]

According to Hegel, the category of the something (*Etwas*) is the first negation of negation required for determinacy to be possible.[117] The "something" is by being the negation of something else and vice versa. The something is the beginning, but only the beginning, of the *subject*. However, the something's being-for-self, as negative self-relation, undergoes further dialectical transformation. That is, the something is doubled as a (determinate) something and an other. Each is equally an other, and so they are both the same—that is, inseparable—yet irreducible—that is, the one . . . the other.[118]

> In the something, we immediately hit upon the other, and we know that there is not only something, but also something else. But the other is not such that we just happen upon it; it is not as if something could be thought without that other; rather the something is the other of itself, and *the limit of a something becomes objective to it in the other*. When we ask what the difference between the something and the other is, then it turns out that both are the same; this identity is expressed in Latin by calling the pair *aliud-aliud*.[119]

Both are determined equally as something and as other. Thus they are the same, but only as differentiated through their identity and related through their difference. Each maintains itself in its relation and opposition to the other. For, although the other is other in relation to the something, it is nevertheless also an other on its own account apart from the something and so not reducible to the something. It is that which is absolutely dissimilar within itself, that which negates itself and alters itself. But in so doing it remains identical with itself, for that into which it alters (others itself) is the other. In this other, therefore, it only unites with its own self: a union in and through difference.

A. Doubling Implies Relation

Hegel had already made this point in the passage cited.[120] The *relation* of the one and the other is implied by their mutual identity, on the one hand, and

[116] *LPR* 3. 283, 282; emphasis added. Elsewhere Hegel writes about the understanding "whose relations always leave the manifold of related terms as a manifold, and whose unity is always a unity of opposites *left* as opposites" (*ETW* 304). This incomplete mediation characterizes the logic of essence.

[117] *SL* 115. [118] *SL* 117; cf. *EL* §92. [119] *EL* §92Z. [120] See nn. 111–14.

their mutual opposition or difference, on the other. They can be neither identified nor separated; hence they must be related.

Something preserves itself in the negative of its determinate being (its *Nichtdasein*). It is essentially *one* with it and essentially *not one* with it. It stands, therefore, in *a relation* to its otherness and is not simply its otherness. The otherness is both contained in it and also still separate from it; it is a *being-for-other*.[121] But what is only being-for-other would be without any independent being-in-itself. Hegel's point anticipates a later formulation—namely, that the something is a unity of being-in-itself and being-for-other.[122]

It preserves itself in the negative of its determinate being, and is being, but not abstract being in general. As self-related in opposition to its relation to other, as self-equal in opposition to its inequality, it is *being-in-itself*. Being-for-other and being-in-itself constitute the two moments of determinate being, the something. There are present here two pairs of determinations: (1) something and other, (2) being-for-other and being-in-itself. The former contains *unrelatedness* of their determinations; as related only by the "and," something and other fall apart. But *their truth is their relation*—that is, their union.[123] Each is being-in-itself-for-an-other, and in order to be for the other it must have being-in-itself. Each contains or includes the other in its self-relation; in its being-in-itself it is also being-for-other. According to Errol Harris:

> This identity of Something and Other is the dialectical transformation, through Becoming, of the identity of Being and Nothing. The dialectical movement throughout, besides being the identification and sublation of opposites, is also their transformation into higher forms in which their implicit nature (or *the totality immanent in them*) is more truly and adequately expressed. Just as Becoming is the truth of Being and Nothing, so *Dasein*, as the unity of the One and the Other, is the truth of the first triad as a whole, which will shortly be sublated into being-for-self.[124]

B. Reciprocal Relation Implies Totality

Being-for-other and being-in-itself are, therefore, the adeterminations posited as *moments of one and the same something*, as determinations that are relations and that remain in their unity, in the unity of determinate being. *Each therefore also contains within itself its other moment, which is distinguished from it.*

In the initial category of the *Logic*, being and nothing are both absolutely different and opposed, and yet, since they share the common absence of any

[121] *SL* 119.
[122] *SL* 164: "In the One, being for-self is . . . the absolute union of relation-to-other and self-relation."
[123] *SL* 119. [124] *ILH* 103–4; emphasis added.

determination, their difference disappears. What is thought is simply the transition from one to the other. Thus they are sublated into coming to be and ceasing to be. In *something*, which is the beginning of the subject, being is being-in-itself. Being that is self-relation, equality with self, is now no longer immediate, but is only as the non-being of otherness (determinate being reflected into itself). Similarly, non-being as a moment of something is, in this unity, not negative determinate being in general, but an *other*, and, more specifically, since being is differentiated from it—at the same time a relation to its negative determinate being—a being-for-other.[125] Each as limit of the other means that they mutually delimit—that is, identify and differentiate—each other.

Being-in-itself and being-for-other are in the first instance *distinct*, but that something also has within it the same character that is in itself, and ‚conversely, that what it is as being-for-other it also is in itself—this is the *identity of being-in-itself and being-for-other*, in accordance with the determination that something itself is one and the same something in and of both moments, which are therefore undividedly present within it.[126] This identity or totality is the determinate unity of being-in-itself and being-for-itself in the something, and, since something and other are identical, both are identities of being-in-itself and being-for-itself. Again Harris helpfully clarifies and elaborates:

> Something and Other are opposed but none the less identical. First . . . through the limit which each determines for the other, each is defined and made what it is. *Each is thus at once identical with, in being different from, its other.* But further each is equally other to the other and it is indifferent which is taken as taken as this, which as that. They are each something and both other. In these respects *they are the same, yet they have these mutual relations only because they are different . . . Identity in and through difference is thus doubly established.*[127]

Looking ahead to further development of the *Logic*, Hegel observes that this *identity in and through difference* is achieved in the sphere of determinate being (*Dasein*), but more explicitly in the logic of essence—the relation of inner and outer—and most concretely in the *Begriffslogik* as the unity of concept and actuality.[128] As we have seen, the unity of concept and actuality

[125] *SL* 119.

[126] This identity of the something in itself with something in its being-for-other, excludes and overcomes the Kantian interpretation of the "in-itself" as empty formalism. The *Logic* clarifies that the "in itself" means what something is in its concept; but the concept is concrete in itself, and is comprehensible simply as concept. As determined within itself and the connected whole of its determinations, the in itself is cognizable (*SL* 120–1).

[127] *ILH* 104; emphasis added.

[128] *SL* 120. In the last mentioned *Begriffslogik*, unity of concept and actuality is a reference to Hegel's reconstructed ontological proof, which sublates the distinction between merely subjective subjectivity and objectivity, which means that objectivity is no longer understood as opposed to subjectivity, but rather as the objectification and realization of the subject. This reading reflects Hegel's reconstruction of the proof, in which being is both opposed to the concept, contrary to

in and through difference constitutes the absolute idea *both* as the ontological proof and as an articulated trinitarian totality.[129] But it is anticipated here in the dialectical analysis of something and other, because the something is constituted as the negation of negation and as such is the beginning of the subject, and because each, taken as incipient subject, is *identical* with the other only through their mutual *difference* from each other.

This is a point of crucial significance that is expressed in the recognitive universal consciousness in the *Philosophy of Spirit*, where Hegel writes: "In this condition of universal freedom, when I am reflected into myself, I am immediately reflected into the other, and conversely, I am related immediately to myself because I am related to others."[130] In his lectures Hegel elaborates further:

> The process of consciousness that we are considering, is the *realization of the concept*. What is posited in the concept . . . —the ideality of the other and the unity of the two—is the abstract. The reality is that each of these moments obtains a concrete meaning, that each of these moments itself is the concept as a whole. Thus in friendship the two sides constitute this whole. Each [is] I, and I in such a way that the I, since it is not merely an unyielding individual, but has suspended itself, has negated itself and has its conscious relation to itself in the self-consciousness of the other.[131]

The identity in and through difference, in which each is identical with, in being different from, its other, is the realization of the concept as an organized articulated totality—that is, the singularity of the concept. The above passage helpfully distinguishes between an abstract, one-sided sense, the ideality of the other and the unity of the two, and a concrete reciprocally mediated sense in which the abstract sides obtain a concrete meaning in their unity—for example, in friendship the two sides each constitute the whole. In this respect they are the same, yet they have these mutual relations only because they are different. It is important to keep these distinct and not confuse them or run them together, as is too often done, as, for example, when it is claimed that identity reduces the other to the same. This interpretation is a critique of the one-sided abstract universal and identity, which Hegel has already anticipated and disposed of. In friendship each I negates itself and has its relation to itself in the self-consciousness of the other, by whose recognition the I returns to itself as a We, the determinate universal.

The broad significance of something and other for the universal singularity of the concept and the universal–social consciousness is confirmed in Hegel's *Philosophy of Spirit*. Hegel expounds the systematic differentiation and

the concept, and the expression of the concept. In other words, Hegel's reconstruction of the proof is trinitarian, including both negation and negation of negation.

[129] *EL* §§213–15. [130] *E.* §436+Z.

[131] *Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit 1827–8*, trans. with introduction by R. R. Williams (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 144.

development of the concept of spirit into subjective, objective, and absolute spirit. In *E.* §385Z he refers to the dialectic of the one and the other. In this dialectical development, subjective spirit achieves objective, determinate self-realization in the world. Hegel discusses this development of subjective spirit into mundane personhood in connection with property and ownership—the same order he follows in abstract right of the *Philosophy of Right*.[132] He makes it clear that ownership, like contract and abstract right, presupposes but does not exhaust mutual recognition.[133]

The recognition of freedom present in ownership—the right to exclude others—is incomplete and formal, because it abstracts from the deeper imprescriptible dimensions of freedom—for example, conscience, the right to take possession of oneself that constitutes personhood, which is the general capacity for right.[134] The realization of this capacity for right occurs in mutual recognition: the other is the soil in which I recognize and relate to myself. In *E.* §490, Hegel reiterates that the presence of freedom in ownership is abstract, partial, and external. But:

> The concrete return [*Rückkehr*) of me to myself as a whole in a condition of externality is that I, the infinite relation to myself, am as person the repulsion of myself from myself, and possess the determinate existence of my personhood in the *being of other persons*, i.e., in my relation to them and in a state of being recognized by them that is reciprocal.[135]

Ownership presupposes reciprocal interhuman recognition wherein each possesses the determinate existence of its personhood in the being of others—that is, their recognition. In mutual recognition, the parties are distinguished by their determinate identities and related through their determinate differences. Mutual recognition is the phenomenological genesis of the concepts of spirit and ethical life, the general structure of which is set forth in the *Philosophy of Spirit*:

> The universal–social self-consciousness is the affirmative knowing of itself in another self, in which each as free singularity possesses absolute independence, but by virtue of the negation of its immediacy or desire, no longer separates itself from others, but is the objective universal self-consciousness, which possesses real universality as reciprocity as it knows itself to be recognized by free others and knows this insofar as it recognizes the other and knows it to be free. . . . This [universal–social self-consciousness] is the form of consciousness of every essential spirituality, i.e., the family, fatherland and state as well as all the virtues, love, friendship, bravery, honor, etc.[136]

[132] *PR* §40. In abstract right Hegel pursues a methodological individualism, which abstracts from spirit, the I that is a We constituted through reciprocal recognition. Abstract right presupposes mutual recognition.

[133] *PR* §§71, 35, 57. [134] *PR* §§35–6.

[135] *E.* §490; emphasis in original; my translation. [136] *E.* §436.

The consummate recognition of freedom in objective spirit is achieved in the state, which is grounded in the universal recognition of human freedom as such, the universal "right to have rights," and the realization of this right demands the abolition of slavery.[137]

4. TOWARD THE PERSONHOOD OF THE ABSOLUTE IDEA

The personhood of the absolute in the *Logic* constitutes the consummate singularity of the absolute idea, the absolute subject–object. The absolute idea is the inseparability of its concept and objectivity; it unites the theoretical and practical idea: the absolute must know itself, and to know itself it must manifest itself. But manifestation is manifestation to an other. Hence the absolute cannot simply "be" absolute; rather it must differentiate itself (*Urteil*), appear to and find itself in, and return to itself from, its otherness; i.e., it must both produce and resolve its self-contradiction (syllogism). This means that knowledge of it is not immediate, but a mediated immediacy that involves both negation (whereby it differentiates itself), and the negation of the initial negation that resolves it and organizes the idea as a whole into a system. Recalling the point he established in his discussion of something and other as the beginning of logical subjectivity—that at the base of these determinations is negative unity with itself—Hegel portrays the infinite negation of the absolute idea—the negation of negation—as

> the simple point of the *negative relation to self, the innermost source of all activity*, of all animate and spiritual self-movement. . . . [Infinite negation] is this sublating of contradiction, but just as little as the contradiction is it an act of external reflection, but *rather the innermost, most objective moment of life and spirit, in which a subject, a person, a free being exists.*[138]

Because this is the case, the absolute idea is more than substance become subject—for subjectivity implies only the *possibility* of personhood.[139] But, since the absolute idea is "the possibility that has its actuality in itself, as that whose nature can be comprehended only as existing,"[140] the idea is also universal singularity, to which the concept of personhood (*Persönlichkeit*) belongs. Since Hegel's *Logic* is a general ontology, this universal singularity

[137] *PR* §57R.

[138] *SL* 835–6. For an analogue in Hegel's concept of person, cf. *PR* §66. Personhood involves "the act whereby I take possession of my personality and substantial essence and make myself a responsible being with moral and religious values and capable of holding rights." Cf. Hegel's critique of Spinoza for lacking the infinite form of negation; see p. 203 nn. 80–2.

[139] *PR* §35Z. [140] *EL* §214.

is the logical foundation and possibility of Hegel's realphilosophical concepts of persons, personhood, and community—including his doctrines of subjective spirit, objective spirit, and absolute spirit.

It is no accident that Hegel's account of the absolute idea reflects his account of the ontological proof. Hegel speculatively re-enacts the immanent necessity of the transition from subjective concept to objectivity in his analysis of the drive (*Trieb*) as a condition of deficiency and experienced contradiction. The drive is the process of sublating subjective need and purpose by an action that produces satisfaction of the drive and the actualization of the purpose. "All the action in the world is a sublating of the (merely) subjective and a positing of the objective and so is the production of the unity of both. . . . the concept is just what, as living being, negates the [merely] subjective and posits it objectively."[141] Invoking the concept of drive presupposes the conception of the absolute idea as living, self-determining, self-maintaining organic process. Objectivity here is no longer opposed to the subject, but rather its realization.

Hegel's concept of logical personhood (*Persönlichkeit*) pervades the tripartite distinctions of Hegel's philosophy of spirit. He identifies personhood with one moment of the concept, to wit, its *Einzelheit*—singularity—its maximal concreteness and intensity, as it posits, endures, and resolves its contradictions. Hegel points out that the three moments of the concept—Universality, Particularity (*Besonderheit*), and Singularity (*Einzelheit*)—are not three concepts, which can be counted, but rather one concept with three inseparable moments.[142] Thus each of these is both distinct and yet the whole concept. Singularity is the concrete determinate universal in which the concept is posited as a whole and thus is *for itself*. The logical personhood of the concept is a subjectivity that, in contrast to a one-sided subjectivity, overgrasps itself as a self-organizing totality.[143] The personhood of the absolute idea is a "universal singularity"—a mentality that overgrasps—that is, includes, delimits, and sublates the one-sidedness (or one-sided subjectivity) of judgment; the latter is both an abstraction and a negation.[144] Universal singularity, in contrast to judgment, corresponds to syllogism,—that is, the negation of negation that unites the elements judgment separates. Admittedly the term "universal singularity" sounds odd if not contradictory, but no more so than its "cousins," "unity in and through difference" or "identity of identity and difference."[145]

[141] *LPR* 1. 439.

[142] *SL* 618–20. Hegel observes that the determinations of the concept "are determinate concepts [totalities], are themselves essentially the totality of all determinations. It is therefore quite inappropriate for the purpose of grasping such an inner totality, to seek to apply numerical and spatial relationships in which all determinations fall asunder; on the contrary, they are the last and worst medium which could be employed" (*SL* 618).

[143] *EL* §215. [144] *EL* §§162–3.

[145] Cf. Hegel's explanation of his technical, non-standard term "concept" in *EL* §§160Z–163.

A clearer picture of what Hegel is driving at is possible when, in expounding the universal singularity of the concept, he asserts that the principle of personhood is universality.[146] This universal singularity is elaborated further in his 1825 *Philosophy of Spirit* lectures. We have already seen Hegel distinguish between "*immediate singularity*" and "*universal singularity.*" These are the main categorical distinctions as yet undifferentiated within the singularity of the concept. We begin with the former.

Immediate singularity is on display in Hegel's famous account of the life-and-death struggle for recognition. In life-and-death struggle each takes itself as an isolated atom, which immediately collides with an other. Each is immediately certain of himself but utterly uncertain of the other. Here the selves conceive themselves as immediate, exclusive, pre-recognitive singularities. Hegel comments that "all of this lacks the determination and condition of universality and remains in the form of *immediate singularity*. At this level of self-understanding it is still the case that if I recognize another as free, I lose my freedom."[147] When the self thinks of itself as immediate singularity—as the abstract "I am I" or "being-for-itself"—it is self-seeking "desire that relates itself only to itself…"[148] In desire

> the immediate singularity of my self-consciousness and my freedom are not yet separated. Consequently I am unable to surrender anything of my particularity without giving up my independence.… I have not yet renounced this [purely self-regarding, self-seeking] particularity, I have not yet distinguished it from myself, not yet discarded it, have not yet raised the self-consciousness of my freedom to universal self-consciousness.[149]

Consequently, under these conditions and presuppositions there can be no recognition of the one by the other and no genuine or affirmative relation between them. If the life-and-death struggle were carried through to the end, neither demand for recognition would be satisfied, and mutual destruction would prove only that both despised life.

Master and slave is a social *Gestalt* that offers a limited, incomplete way out of the life-and death-struggle; it resolves the contradiction of mutual violence and self-elimination, but at the price of establishing another contradiction—namely, the one-sided unequal recognition enforced by coercion and the threat of death. While the "resolution" of master and slave puts an end to violence, it transforms the abstract negation of sheer violence into domination and "legitimates" unequal recognition. The one who makes himself a slave gives up his claim to recognition because he is held by his master in thrall to death, the absolute master. By turning himself into a slave, he undergoes a profound alienation of what is strictly speaking inalienable[150]—namely, his

[146] *EL* §163Z. [147] *BPhG* 74–7; emphasis added.
[148] *BPhG* 74–7. [149] *BPhG* 74–7. [150] *PR* §66.

personhood: he no longer counts as an "I." Rather the master—who considers the slave to be devoid of personhood and self-hood—is his "I."[151] The slave alienates himself from himself in order to preserve himself. But in so doing he no longer counts as an "I," either for the master or for himself.

Both of these *Gestalten* include self-subverting actions that are at odds with, if not contradictory to, the immanent logic of relation that requires mutuality and freedom; the contradiction can be resolved only by moving to a higher level whose principle is inclusive universal singularity. Hegel's account of mutual recognition presents one way of moving from immediate singularity to universal singularity. Recall that freedom in Hegel's sense means being at home with oneself in an other. Recognition requires the renunciation of coercion and the carrying-out of an indivisible, mutually affirmative, joint action that constitutes the syllogism of reciprocal recognition. One-sided action is "useless" because what must come to pass—being at home with self in one's other—can be brought about only jointly. The syllogism of recognition is an indivisible action that exhibits both identity and difference wherein each side is affirmed and mediated by the other. Hegel describes it as follows:

> [Each] is aware that it both is, and is not, the other consciousness, and equally that this other is *for itself* only when it supersedes itself as being-for-itself and is for itself only in the being-for-self of the other. Each is for the other the middle term, through which each mediates itself with itself and unites with itself; and each is for itself, and for the other, an immediate being on its own account, which at the same time is such only through this mediation. They *recognize* themselves as *mutually recognizing* one another.[152]

In such *reciprocal* recognition, both selves are transformed from their private atomistic immediacies into an immediacy mediated by other, an enlarged mentality, a "We." While the "We" is a universal, it is not an abstract universal or mere common term that is indifferent to or exclusive of its particulars. Rather it is immanent in both as a result of their mutual exchange of mediating the freedom and identity of the other. The I becomes a We through mediation by other, and the We is an I who reciprocally mediates the other. Hegel's famous account of mutual recognition is the phenomenological genesis and the logical structure of the concept of spirit (*Geist*)—to wit, universal singularity.

In his *Encyclopedia Philosophy of Spirit*, Hegel analyzes the outcome of syllogism of recognition—the concept of *Geist*—as universal self-consciousness, or universal singularity. He formulates the *universal singularity* of spirit as follows:

> The universal self-consciousness is the affirmative knowing of itself in other selves, in which each, as free singularity, possesses absolute independence, but,

[151] *EL* §163Z. [152] *PhS* §184.

> by virtue of the negation of its immediacy or desire, no longer differentiates itself from others, but is universal, objective self-consciousness, and possesses real universality as reciprocity such that it knows itself to be recognized in free others, and knows this insofar as it recognizes the other and knows it in its freedom. This universal reappearance of the self-consciousness, the concept [*Begriff*] that knows itself in its objectivity as the subjectivity identical with objectivity and therefore universal, is the form of the substantial consciousness of every essential spirituality, the family, the fatherland, the state, as well as all virtues—love, friendship, bravery, honor and reputation.[153]

Iring Fetscher emphasizes that this universal self-consciousness constituted through reciprocal recognition is for Hegel not only the genesis of spirit and ethical life, but also the appearance of reason, the rational becoming actual:

> Reciprocal recognition . . . is the *Urform*, the fundamental phenomenon, of the reason realizing itself in human experience. This universal consciousness is the fundamental form, the structure of both the social consciousness [*Gesellschaftsbewusstsein* or We consciousness] and of the individual consciousness that knows itself to be universally valid and rational. This universal consciousness constitutes the foundation, the substance of any essential spirituality (institution). . . . Consequently *the universal self-consciousness is not only the human phenomenal form of the ontological principle*, (Idea)—the idea is the true in and for itself, the absolute unity of concept and objectivity—*but also the foundation and substance of ethical life*.[154]

Fetscher makes several important points that are passed over in non-metaphysical interpretations. First, the universal consciousness is the fundamental form of *both social consciousness and individual consciousness that knows itself to be universally valid and rational*. Second, the universal consciousness is therefore universal singularity, at once universal and singular. It is a true infinite that incorporates its other. For this reason it is also constitutive of the broad sense of personhood that constitutes spirit (*Geist*). That is why universal consciousness constitutes the foundation and substance of any essential spirituality—to wit, the foundation of ethical life.

Third, the universal self-consciousness is the phenomenal human form of Hegel's fundamental ontological–logical principle—to wit, the absolute idea, which is the absolute unity of concept and objectivity.[155] Hegel formulates this point in his *Philosophy of Spirit*:

> This unity of consciousness and self-consciousness includes individuals as shining into each other. . . . The truth [of this mutual shining] is the universality and objectivity of self-consciousness existing in and for itself—reason. . . . What in

[153] *E.* §436; my translation.
[154] Iring Fetscher, *Hegels Lehre vom Menschen* (Stuttgart: Fromman, 1970), 120; emphasis added.
[155] *EL* §§213–14.

> previous paragraphs [*E.* §436] we have called the universal self-consciousness, is in its truth the concept of reason—*the concept insofar as it exists not simply as logical idea, but as the idea developed into self-consciousness.* For as we know from the *Logic*, the idea consists in the unity of the subjective concept and objectivity. But the universal self-consciousness has also shown itself to be such a unity in and through difference, for, as we have seen, *the universal self-consciousness is both absolutely different from its other and yet at the same time absolutely identical with* it. This identity of subjectivity and objectivity constitutes the universality now achieved by self-consciousness, which overgrasps both its sides or particularities and in which universal self-consciousness these particularities resolve themselves. Since self-consciousness has achieved this level of universality, it ceases to be self-consciousness in the proper, narrower sense of the term, precisely because self-consciousness in the narrower sense holds fast to the abstract particularity of the self. By suspending and relinquishing its *abstract* particularity, self-consciousness becomes reason.[156]

In objective spirit the universal will appears in the form and shape of community.[157] However, for Hegel objective spirit sublates itself into a higher standpoint: reason. Reason is a trans-ethnic, transnational universal principle, which gives added significance to Hegel's important assertion that the principle of personhood is universality and to the meaning of universal singularity.[158] Personhood is measured by the criterion of reason as itself social—that is, a unity in and through difference of concept and objectivity, of which universal intersubjective freedom, the substantial form of ethical life, is the appearance. Personhood as universal singularity manifests and is measured by a higher rational principle than objective spirit. Objective spirit is [finite] ethical life exhibiting diversity (*Verschiedenheit*) rather than absolute difference.[159]

While Hegel uses the term "pure ego" in reference to the ontological principle, the unity of concept and objectivity,[160] he also characterizes the reality of the concept as a plurality of *Ichselbsts*, which constitute the determinate difference.[161] Thus he holds that reason itself is pluralized, communal—that is, organic interconnectedness and totality. In other words, reason is both one and many, a unity in and through difference.[162] Although Hegel is clear that there are not two reasons and that reason is only one, he is also clear that in the history of philosophy reason is also pluralized,and yet, even as pluralized in opposition, the many conflicting philosophies are still philosophy.

The shift from universal self-consciousness or objective spirit to reason is something that Hegel portrays in his *Encyclopedia* philosophy of subjective spirit. Reason is the identity of concept and objectivity, but this unity does not occur in or at the level of consciousness, because the latter is fundamentally

[156] *E.* §437+Z; my translation, emphasis added. [157] *PR* §71Z. [158] *EL* §163Z.
[159] *E.* §437. [160] He refers to *EL* 213 in *E.* §437. [161] *BPhG* §438R, 96–8.
[162] Cf. Hegel's view of the unity of reason and the plurality of philosophies in his *LHP* preface. Of course this pluralization can be comprehended properly only if grasped as a whole.

constituted by opposition and externality. For this reason the object of consciousness per se does not count as being or objectivity; the object of consciousness is still subjective. In contrast, reason is identical with the idea, "which is not so impotent that it merely ought to be and is not actual."[163] Reason is the active, efficacious idea, the union of the concept with objectivity (categories). Here the term object (*Objekt*) counts as being, and the unity in and through difference of concept and being constitutes both the definition of reason and the concept of God.[164]

Hegel brings out the shift from self-consciousness to reason in this way. In self-consciousness I am primary vis-à-vis the object, consciousness takes possession of the object, pervades it cognitively, and so on. But reason is in general the idea and the idea is reason/rational. This involves a shift of perspective from a narrower, one-sided, atomistic perspective of individual consciousness to a higher perspective—reason—in which human subjectivity attests its own finitude and decentering, both individually and collectively: "*We do not possess the idea, the idea possesses us. So also reason possesses us: reason is our substance.*"[165] Such "possession" or decentering is not heteronomous because "there is subjectivity in reason, the form of which is determined as absolute subjectivity, which is knowing and indeed I, personhood [(*Persönlichkeit*], more precisely determined as singularity [*Einzelnheit*] existing for itself."[166] Reason is universal singularity. However, "it is also my singularity, not my immediate singularity but my *universal singularity*, and it determines itself in and for itself…"[167] Hegel develops this analysis of universal singularity further in his distinction between the spurious infinite and the true infinite in his *Philosophy of Religion*. The true infinite is the one of the few categories of the *Logic* explicitly taken up in the *Philosophy of Religion*.[168] We examine it in the next chapter.

Reason is objective thought—to wit, the certainty that its determinations are not merely subjective, but objective determinations of the essence of things.[169] In his 1825 Lectures Hegel adds that this certainty is the immanent form of reason, the pure concept existing for itself: self-certainty as infinite universality.

[163] *EL* §6R.

[164] *BPhG* §438, 98–10. Hegel's definition of reason here is ontotheological, and reflects Hegel's reconstruction of the ontological proof. Cf. *EL* §§51R, 214.

[165] *BPhG* 99; emphasis added. In the *Logic* Hegel rejects the idea that the rational forms of thought "are means for us, rather… we serve them… in fact they have us in their possession" (*SL* 35). Cf. *SL* 443: in relation to the idea, finitude withdraws into its ground, i.e., when it posits the idea it simultaneously posits itself as posited. There is a further development of this point in *LPR* 1. 249–50; see also section in 1824 Lectures on the true infinite (the transition from the empirical to the speculative view of religion). Cf. *LPR* 1. 288–328; cf. also *SL* 748.

[166] *BPhG* 99.

[167] *E.* §439; *BPhG* 100; emphasis added.

[168] See Robert Williams, "Hegel's Concept of the True Infinite," *Owl of Minerva*, 42/1–2 (2010–11), 89–122. See also *Tragedy, Recognition and the Death of God*, ch. 7.

[169] *E.* §439.

In this rational self-knowledge, *difference is posited within its universal certainty*: this is spiritual consciousness, rational self-consciousness. The true standpoint of spirit is that there is no abyss, no impenetrable barrier, between cognitive subjectivity and its object.[170] Cognition is the "reconciliation of the reason that is conscious of itself with the reason that *is* [in the world]."[171]

5. THE PERSONHOOD OF THE ABSOLUTE IDEA

The absolute idea sums up and exemplifies Hegel's speculative doctrine of personhood as universal singularity "according to the concept" that is presented in the *Encylopedia Logic*, §§160–3, and sketched briefly in his *Philosophy of Right*, §7. The "easy part" of the doctrine consists in its first two moments—namely abstract universality, the possibility of negating and abstracting from every determination, and, particularity, having a determinate object, content, and end. These moments of freedom are abstractions, but not the whole, for "freedom lies neither in indeterminacy [alone] nor in determinacy [alone], but is both at once.... Freedom is to will something determinate, yet to be with oneself [*bei sich*] in this determinacy and to return ... to the universal."[172]

The speculative concept of freedom includes a criticism of metaphysical conceptions of the will as a subject or a substratum and replaces these with an account of freedom as a dialectical process: "the will is not complete and universal until it is determined, and until this determination is superseded and idealized; it does not become will until it is this self-mediating activity and return into itself."[173] Universality and particularity are abstractions from a higher, concrete whole, the concept, which the understanding finds incomprehensible—namely, "infinity as self-referring negativity, the ultimate source of all activity, life and consciousness."[174]

[170] Hegel criticizes the Kantian conception of the thinkable, but unknowable thing in itself: "The meaning of the thing in itself is here revealed. It is a very simple abstraction, but which counted until recently as an important determination. *Things are called in themselves in so far as abstraction is made from all being-for-other, which means simply, in so far as they are thought as devoid of all determination, as nothings.* In this sense it is impossible to know what the thing in itself is. For the question What? demands determinacy, determinations, and content. But if things in themselves are abstract and devoid of any determination, the question cannot be answered or only an absurd contradictory answer is given. [For Hegel] the thing in itself is the same as the absolute of which we know nothing except that in it all is one. What is actually in these things in themselves we know quite well: they are nothing but truthless, empty abstractions. The Logic clarifies that the 'in itself' means what something is in its concept; but the concept is concrete in itself, and is comprehensible simply as concept. As determined within itself and the connected whole of its determinations, the in itself is cognizable" (*SL* 120–1).

[171] *EL* §6R. [172] *PR* §7. [173] *PR* §7. [174] *PR* §7.

Hegel illustrates his speculative concept of personhood and freedom as self-mediating activity with reference to friendship and love. Our investigation has clarified the meaning of singularity (*Einzelheit*), which makes self-mediation (being-for-self) compatible with mediation by other, to wit, the singularity of the concept is, as Hegel says, not to be confused with immediate singularity—for that leads straight to the unyielding being-for-self *only*, which produces the life and death struggle and master/slave. Rather the *singularity of the concept is not immediate but universal, mediated singularity*. Only the latter is constitutive of personhood and freedom in Hegel's sense of being at home with oneself in an other. Both abstract universality and abstract particularity (*Besonderheit*) are reconciled in universal singularity (*Einzelheit*), which is their determinate union in and through difference. It is this union in and through difference that is reflected in the self-consciousness of freedom present in friendship and love wherein each regards the other as other, and returns to itself in the other.[175]

The moments of the concept—its immanent distinctions: universality, particularity, and singularity—are each the entire concept as a whole. The absolute idea completes the analysis of the concept. The absolute idea as the absolute subject–object[176] is both itself and its opposite, both concept and objectivity, idea and reality.[177] The idea is the process of differentiating itself into particularity, producing opposition, and reconciling its opposition in an affirmative unity in and through difference.

> The identity of the idea with itself is one with the process; the thought which liberates actuality from the illusory show of purposeless mutability and transfigures it into the idea must not represent the truth of this actuality as a dead repose, as a mere picture, lifeless, without drives or movement, as a . . . number or an abstract thought; by virtue of the *freedom which the concept attains in the idea*, *the idea possesses within itself also stubborn opposition; its repose consists in the security and certainty with which it eternally creates and eternally overcomes that opposition, in it meeting with itself.*[178]

Since the idea produces and reconciles its contradictions, its determinations are not limitations but rather its self-specifications. The idea is not only its own ontological proof;[179] its actuality resides in the logical moment of its singularity—that is, concrete universality.[180] This singularity of the idea, the locus of its personhood, belongs to the affirmative moment of its dialectic, the negation of negation,[181] in which the idea coincides with itself in its objectivity and is for itself both determinate and totality.

[175] *PR* §7. [176] *EL* §214. [177] *SL* 755. [178] *SL* 759; emphasis added.
[179] *SL* 760; *EL* §§214–15. [180] *SL* 760.
[181] *EL* §82. In the *Philosophy of Right* Hegel speaks of the negation of negation as the return to self, the act whereby I take possession of my personhood and substantial essence (*PR* §§57, 66). This act is reflected in the *Einzelheit* of the concept, which posits the concept as a totality.

This universal singularity of the idea includes personhood. Hegel writes that "the concept [of the absolute idea] is not merely soul, but free subjective concept that is for itself and therefore possesses personhood [*Persönlichkeit*]."[182] Further, this personhood is that of the practical objective concept,

> which, as *person, is impenetrable atomic subjectivity*—but, none the less, it is not exclusive singularity [*ausschließende Einzelheit*], but explicitly for itself universality and cognition, and has in its other its own objectivity [*Objektivität*] as its counterpart [*Gegenstand*]. All else is error, confusion, opinion, endeavor, caprice and transitoriness; the absolute idea alone is being, imperishable life, self-knowing truth and is all truth.[183]

On the one hand, the personhood of the absolute idea is impenetrable, like that of finite individuals, and the universal self-consciousness that is the basic structure of ethical life.[184] However, this impenetrability does not imply that the absolute idea is simply an exclusive atom or negative unity that excludes all relation, cognition, otherness, and/or others. Rather, in its constitutive differentiation, doubling, and dialectic of its being-for-itself and being-for-other, the absolute idea meets with its own other, and thus coincides with itself in its objectivity. It both posits and resolves its contradiction. Consequently, it is, as contradiction, the negation of negation—to wit, the posited dialectic of itself.[185]

On the other hand, this dialectic of the idea as totality, this infinite differentiating judgment into two sides, each of which is the independent totality, is the negative unity of the idea as totality. This negative unity of the idea is "overgrasped," and the overgrasping subjectivity is infinite subjectivity or personhood:

> in the negative unity of the idea, the infinite overgrasps the finite, thinking overgrasps being, subjectivity overgrasps objectivity. This unity of the idea is subjectivity, or thinking, or infinity, and therefore it has to be essentially distinguished from the idea as substance, just as *this overgrasping subjectivity, thinking, or infinity has to be distinguished from the one-sided subjectivity, thinking or infinity* to which it reduces itself in judging and determining. . . . This last stage of the process proves at the same time to be what is genuinely first and what is only through itself.[186]

Overgrasping subjectivity, thinking, and so on thinks the contradiction of the idea as both sides of its own negative self-relation, thereby resolving it in a higher unity.

> The dogmatism of the metaphysics of the understanding consists in its adherence to one-sided thought-determinations in their isolation, whereas the idealism of speculative philosophy involves the principle of totality and shows itself able to

[182] *SL* 824. [183] *SL* 824; *Werke*, 6. 549; translation modified. [184] *E.* §436.
[185] *SL* 835; *WL*, vol. 6. [186] *EL* §215+Z; emphasis added.

> overgrasp the one-sidedness of the abstract determinations of the understanding. . . . these determinations are not valid when they are isolated from each other. . . . on the contrary, being a totality, it [overgrasping subjectivity] contains *united* within itself the determinations that dogmatism holds to be fixed and true [only] in a state of separation from one another.[187]

Hegel acknowledges that formal thinking lays down its principle that contradiction is unthinkable, "but as a matter of fact the thinking of contradiction is the essential moment of the concept. Formal thinking does in fact think contradiction, only it at once looks away from it and in saying it is unthinkable it merely passes over from the contradiction to abstract negation."[188] However, for Hegel the thinking and sublating of contradiction—the negation of negation—

> is the *turning point* of the movement of the concept. It is the *simple point of negative relation to self*, the innermost source of all activity, of all animate and spiritual self-movement, the dialectical soul that everything true possesses and through which alone it is true; for on this subjectivity alone rests the sublating of the opposition between concept and reality, and the unity that is truth.[189]

This negation of negation that sublates the opposition between concept and reality is not an act of external reflection "but rather *the innermost, most objective moment of life and spirit, through which a subject, a person, a free being exists*."[190] That is, personhood (*Personlichkeit*), despite its apparent abstraction, is the affirmative result of its constitutive dialectic; it is the resolution of its own, systematic contradiction. It is the universality that is self-particularizing singularity, and that in its other meets or rather concludes with itself.

Further, the absolute idea, as process, as method, both advances and withdraws into ground, as does the concept.[191] The universal singularity of the concept is the ground of both abstract universality and its opposite, abstract particularity; singularity is the entire concept of the idea posited as a totality.[192] The absolute idea does not drop singularity, but, as true infinite, realizes and manifests itself as universal singularity. In the depths of its vital singularity and creativity, Hegel identifies the personhood of the absolute idea:

> Each new stage of *forthgoing*, that is, of *further determination*, is also a withdrawal inwards, the *greater extension* is equally a *higher intensity*. The richest is therefore the most concrete and most *subjective*, and that which withdraws into itself into

[187] *EL* §32Z. [188] *EL* §32Z. [189] *EL* §32Z.
[190] *SL* 835–6; *WL* 6. 563; emphasis in original.
[191] *EL* §159; Hegel describes the concrescence of the idea with itself in otherness as a "liberation which is not the flight of abstraction, and not the [dependent] having of itself in that other actuality . . . as something other, but the having of its very own being and positing in it. As existing for itself this liberation is called 'I', as developed into its totality it is free spirit, as feeling it is love, as enjoyment, beatitude."
[192] *EL* §163.

> the simplest depth is the mightiest and most all-embracing. The highest most concentrated point is the *pure personhood* which, solely through the absolute dialectic which is its nature, no less *embraces and holds everything within itself*, because it makes itself the supremely free . . .[193]

The absolute idea articulates the infinite unity of being-for-self or subjectivity, with being-for-other, and the consequent transition to infinite totality. The personhood of the absolute is universal singularity. But universal singularity is not a subject or a person in the ordinary finite sense of these terms. What then *is* universal personhood, universal singularity? It is not the task of the logic to answer this question, but rather to create the logical-conceptual space in the system in which it can be conceived and discussed. The question concerning universal personhood or universal singularity is taken up in the *Realphilosophie*, including the Philosophy of Spirit, Philosophy of Right, and Philosophy of Religion. There it is more nearly like a community than a person, although these cannot be finally separated, because, as Fetscher has pointed out, the universal consciousness is the fundamental form of *both* social consciousness and individual consciousness.[194]

But that is just Hegel's point. For Hegel's vision is that the I, like the something, exists only as doubled. It is both being-for-self and being-for-other. These two terms can neither be identified nor separated; both are constitutive of freedom as being at home with oneself in one's other (*bei sich in Andere zu sein*). Being-for-self is not constituted without or apart from being-for-other. However, if this is the case, the analysis cannot stop with the one, for the one doubles itself. But, if it doubles itself, this creates the further problem of reconciling the dyadic double with its apparent opposition to its cooperative, reconciled totality in which both the one and the other mutually and reciprocally achieve freedom through their union. Freedom is a unity achieved in and through difference, and this unity requires a double transition. Freedom consists in union with other, being at home with self in the other—whether on the phenomenological level of that I is a We and a We that it is an I (the phenomenological genesis of spirit), or in the syllogism of recognition constitutive of objective spirit, or on the level of speculative theology, the concept of triune absolute spirit as dipolar true infinite:

> The [concrete] universal is therefore *free power*; it is itself and takes its other within its embrace, but *without doing violence* to it; on the contrary, the universal is, in its other, in peaceful communion with itself. We have called it free power, but it could also be called *free love* and *boundless blessedness*, for it bears itself towards its other as towards its own self; in it, it has returned to itself.[195]

[193] *SL* 840–1; emphasis in original.
[194] See Fetscher, *Hegels Lehre vom Menschen.*
[195] *SL* 603; emphasis in original.

The chapter on the absolute Idea is a chapter on method. One result of the method is an emergent, overgrasping subjectivity and pure personhood, that, by positing its presuppositions and cognizing itself in them, returns to itself as maximally concrete. Further, Hegel invokes the further methodological principle of double transition in order to avoid any one-sidedness and metaphysical reductionism. Double transition corrects any semblance of one-sidedness or monism, on the one hand, but without falling into the spurious infinity of dualism, on the other:

> It is only through this double movement that difference gets its due, since each of the two that are distinct [namely, nature and spirit] consummates itself, considered in itself, into the totality and works out its unity with the other. Only this self-sublating one-sidedness of both sides in themselves prevents this unity from becoming one-sided.[196]

Hegel's philosophical trinitarianism means that the absolute idea is not the indefinite dyad stuck in opposition showing itself to be a spurious infinite, but rather an inclusive, articulated whole, which, in positing its initial starting point, makes itself the true beginning:

> It is the idea for which, being what is absolutely first in the method, this end is at the same time only the vanishing of the appearance that the beginning is something immediate and the idea is [merely] a result. This is the cognition that the idea is the one totality.[197]

6. CONCLUSION: PERSONHOOD, COMMUNITY, AND SPIRIT

What then is pure personhood? Although the personhood of the absolute idea is not a person, nevertheless it is more than a mere metaphor, or merely the singing of "hollow praises"[198] for the absolute idea, or a superfluous, dispensable term for Hegel's concept. On the contrary, it is the concept in its supreme self-realization, the "absolute form into which all determinations, the whole fullness of the content posited by it, have returned."[199] If it is not a person, is it a subject? How is it related to spirit? Since our investigation of the distinction between the immediate singularity and the universal singularity of the concept turned into a review of Hegel's account of the phenomenological origin of spirit in mutual recognition, the question of the relation between the personhood of the *Logic* and the spirit of the *Realphilosophie* cannot be avoided. In the *Lectures on the Proofs*, Hegel has a useful and important discussion of

[196] *EL* §241. [197] *EL* §242. [198] *EL* §237Z. [199] *EL* §237Z.

the speculative concept. In this section Hegel describes both personhood and spirit in similar terms, but he also subtly distinguishes them.[200]

Hegel begins his discussion by emphasizing that the speculative concept is distinct from the abstract concept of the understanding. The latter is abstract, indeterminate identity; it is merely logically possible—for example, the formal A = A. In contrast, the speculative concept is concrete in itself; it is not an abstract quasi-numerical unit, but rather a vital concrete unity in and through difference. This unity is bound to and inseparable from its determinations, such that without the determinations the unity would be nothing and would collapse. Since the determinations are essential to the unity, the unity is not an abstract subject to which the determinations are attached as external predicates. Rather the unity of the determinations is essential to them; they are not indifferent to their unity. It is an organic unity constituted by the determinations themselves. Conversely, the determinations are inseparable from each other, passing into each other, having their meaning only in their determinate unity, and no meaning if taken separately by themselves. They constitute the concrete, determinate unity, and the unity is their soul and substance.[201]

According to Hegel, the above analysis constitutes the concreteness of the concept in general—including the concept of God, which is the "profoundest of thoughts."[202] Hegel proceeds to illustrate the concept with some examples drawn from representation, including living organisms. The living organism is, on the one hand, a unity and, on the other hand,

> So inwardly concrete that it exists only as the process of its . . . members and organs which are distinguished from it and from each other; yet when they are removed from the process they perish and cease to be what they are, namely, life, i.e., they no longer have their meaning and significance.[203]

The concept is like an organism: the determinations of the concept exist only in its unity and are therefore inseparable; each of these determinations, insofar as it is taken in distinction from the others, must be regarded not as an abstract determination, but as a concrete concept.[204] But the concept, like God, is only one, but it is a determinate, trinitarian unity. Accordingly, the relationship between these concrete concepts is such that they are regarded as moments of one and the same concept, as being necessarily related to each other as mutually mediating each other, as inseparable. "Thus they exist only in their relation to each other, and this relation is the living unity that comes into being through them and is their presupposed foundation."[205] However, in their appearing they are also diverse; they are the same concept, "only posited differently; and in fact this diversity of being posited differently is necessarily connected with the oneness of the concept, so that the one comes out of the

[200] *LProofs*, 78–81. [201] *LProofs*, 78. [202] *LProofs*, 79.
[203] *LProofs*, 79. [204] *LProofs*, 79. [205] *LProofs*, 79.

other and is posited by the other."[206] In organic life the end brings forth the means and the means bring forth the end.

What then is the unity in and through difference of the concept, and what is it to be called? The unity, as determinate, is determinate in that in it all boundaries and limits, all differences of the members, are ideal, and the concept in uniting these becomes all the more intensive. "The highest intensity of the subject in the ideality of all concrete determinations, and of the highest antitheses, is *spirit*."[207]

It is evident that here Hegel describes spirit in similar, if not exactly the same terms he used in the *Logic* to portray the pure personhood of the concept:

> Each new stage of *forthgoing*, that is, of *further determination*, is also a withdrawal inwards, the *greater extension* is equally a *higher intensity*. The richest is therefore the most concrete and most *subjective*, and that which withdraws into itself into the simplest depth is the mightiest and most all-embracing. The highest most concentrated point is the *pure personhood* which, solely through the absolute dialectic which is its nature, no less *embraces and holds everything within itself* . . .[208]

Are personhood and spirit equivalent terms? Are they interchangeable? Or does personhood sublate itself in spirit? Or does spirit sublate in personhood? Does it make any difference? After all, is not Hegel a philosopher of the subject? Yes, but . . . The simple identification of these terms makes a conceptual mess out of the determinate unity in and through difference constitutive of the concept, teleology, and organism, and the articulated totality that spirit essentially is. Otherwise stated, an egology, especially a transcendental egology, which is asymmetrically related to its constructs, is not a plausible equivalent to the logical concept of articulated totality (organism) where everything is both means and end, mediated and mediating. Transcendental egology is another version of abstract asymmetrical transcendence, which is metaphysically incompatible with social organism as a unity in and through difference. Such egology, as asymmetrical, is a spurious infinite that does not support a concept of personhood in community, much less community as such.

Moreover, Hegel declares himself in favor of spirit as the term designating the determinate unity of the highest antitheses and intensities. This interpretation is borne out by Hegel's logic of the concept in the 1830 *Encyclopedia*. Hegel writes concerning the transition from necessity to freedom, which introduces the concept of the concept, as follows:

> The thinking of necessity . . . is the dissolution of this hardness [of necessity]; because it is its going together with itself in the other—the liberation, which is not a flight of abstraction, not the having of itself in that other actuality . . . but the having of its very own being and positing in the other. As existing for itself, this

[206] *LProofs*, 79. [207] *LProofs*, 80. [208] *SL* 840–1; emphasis in original.

> liberation is called 'I,' *as developed into its totality it is free spirit*, as feeling, it is love, as enjoyment it is blessedness.[209]

This passage asserts that the freedom that emerges from the thinking of necessity is the I, and that the I, developed into its totality, is free spirit. The I develops into totality—as we have seen in the dialectic of something and other, and in the I that is a We—the concept of spirit mediated by mutual recognition. This passage asserts that the I (or the concept) as developed into the totality of the concept is spirit (*Geist*). The I is only the first abstract moment of liberation that must undergo a further development into its totality—the dialectic of the one and the other, the process of recognition discussed above. Apart from this development into totality, the I is still abstract immediacy.

This point is confirmed in Hegel's elaboration of the concreteness of the concept, whose moments, while distinct, are inseparable and can be grasped only on the basis of and together with the others.[210] The logic may culminate in a concept of pure personhood, but, nevertheless, personhood, while equivalent to spirit insofar as both involve the positing and mediation of the highest antitheses and contradictions, retains an abstractness, but not the *asymmetrical* abstractness of a pure ego. The details of this mediation between the "pure personhood of logical idea" and the social concept of Spirit are anticipated in the *Logic*, but worked out more fully in the *Philosophy of Religion*, which focuses on the relationship between infinite and finite.

> God loses nothing when God communicates godself. Therefore this knowledge on the part of the subject is a relationship that issues from God; and, as issuing from God, it is the absolute judgment [*Urteil*] that God *is as* spirit *for* spirit. Spirit is essentially a being for spirit and spirit is *spirit* only insofar as it is *for spirit*.[211]

Thus, while the concept can be called abstract, it is also concrete; "indeed it is also what is altogether [*schlechthin*] concrete, the subject as such. [However] *what is absolutely concrete is the spirit*..."[212] This further development from personhood to spirit is worked out in the *Philosophy of Religion*, and is the topic addressed in the next chapter.

[209] *EL* §159R; translation modified; emphasis added.
[210] *EL* §164R.
[211] *LPR* 1. 383 and n. 47; cf. *E.* §554.
[212] *EL* §164R.

6

The Recognitive Personhood of Absolute Spirit

> The purpose . . . of God . . . can be nothing else than God himself: that his concept should become objective for him and then return within him, that he should possess himself in what is realized. . . . But if we speak of purpose, then it cannot be mere power; it must be somehow determined as well. The soil in which this purpose is to be found cannot be anything else but spirit as such. . . . [God] is his own purpose—the purpose being that he should be recognized and venerated [as God].
>
> (*LPR* 2. 434)

In a handwritten note Hegel writes: "Man mag an Gott glauben bestimmen wie man will, fehlt die Persönlichkeit, so nicht genugend" ("One may define belief in God any way one pleases, but if God lacks personhood, the definition is inadequate").[1] This is one of Hegel's criticisms of substance metaphysics, including Spinoza, whose abstract impersonal substance stands in tension with his declaration concerning the intellectual love of God. Hegel raises similar criticism against traditional natural theology because it separates theological inquiry and discourse from religion and, conceiving God as abstract immutable essence, falls short of the concept of God as spirit. For Hegel the doctrine of God belongs to the concept and doctrine of religion, because the "relationship of spirit to spirit lies at the basis of religion."[2] According to Hegel's *Philosophy of Religion*, God must be understood as spirit in his community, and this social–communal concept of spirit both requires and includes the personhood of God.[3]

This chapter explores Hegel's concept of the concept as the logical basis of the ontological proof, the absolute idea, and absolute spirit. For our purposes,

[1] *Philosophy of Right*, note to §35, in *Werke*, vol. 7.
[2] *LPR* 1. 383 n. 47.
[3] *LPR* 1. 116; *E.* §554. The philosophy of religion is one science within philosophy; indeed it is the *final* one. As such it logically presupposes the results of the philosophical disciplines—the whole of philosophy (*LPR* 1. 365–7).

the 1824 Lectures are indispensable, not because the formulations of specific topics are always superior, but rather because in these lectures Hegel embeds the ontological proof in his account of the Christian religion. This underscores the historical and theological origin of the proof, but Hegel's point is systematic. Here Hegel's discussion of the ontological proof leads directly into the metaphysical concept of God and subsequently into the main themes of Hegel's account of Christianity reconstructed "from the concept." This makes clear the importance of the ontological proof in the metaphysical concept of God (Hegel's philosophical trinitarianism). Further, in turning from the *Logic* to the *Philosophy of Spirit*, the absolute idea becomes absolute recognitive spirit. The objective reality of the absolute idea is no longer viewed simply as the self-objectification of the concept, but as its counterpart. This move to *Realphilosophie* shifts the focus from the abstract categories of the *Logic* to the categories of the *Philosophy of Spirit*, or from philosophical to theological trinitarianism.

Hegel criticizes abstract Enlightenment rationalism that rejected the doctrine of trinity as a contradictory concept of God: three does not equal one (Sect. 2A). Hegel not only criticizes the mathematical–logical categories used in the attack on the Christian trinity; his dialectical reconstruction and defense of trinity bring out Hegel's concept of the speculative concrete as *unio mystica* (Sect. 2B). However, Hegel's mysticism is *sui generis*, because it is not the ineffable, but the speculative concrete, which is the "true supersensible realm,"[4] which includes life, love, mutual recognition, ethical life, and God.

In Section 4 we examine the dialectical personhood of spirit inherent in Hegel's holism. The classical trinitarian formulations tend to be one-sided. They privilege either the unity of the divine in different modes at the expense of difference, or the abstract sense of the person as an impenetrable *individuum*-unit, and end in tritheism at the expense of divine unity and subjectivity, and thus are incapable of fulfilling both requirements. The classical theological formulations operate at the level of the understanding. Taking abstract identity and non-contradiction as absolute, the understanding declares the concepts of life, personhood, mutual recognition, and God to be incomprehensible. Its abstract categories blind the understanding and keep it from grasping the speculative concrete, the vital unity of opposites that living things contain, endure, and resolve, and that are found in higher, richer, spiritual (*geistig*) formations. In contrast to the understanding, speculative

[4] *LPR* 3. 281. Cf. Hegel's comments on the speculative concreteness of universal singularity and its irreducibility to analytic–synthetic methods or to quasi-mathematical construction in *EL* §231+Z.

philosophy grasps living totalities that contain opposing terms sublated in concrescence or determinate unities:

> being a totality, speculative concepts contain the determinations united within themselves that dogmatism holds to be fixed and true in a state of separation. . . . In other words [for speculative philosophy] these determinations are not valid when they are isolated from one another but only when they are sublated . . .

—that is, have "entered into union with their opposite."[5]

Hegel defines ethical life as universal singularity (*allgemeine Einzelheit*)—namely, it is both determinate and universal.[6] Universal singularity is a social infinity; it is both the determinacy that is universal, and the universal that is determinate, concrete, and actual. Universal singularity is the form of both universal–social consciousness and individual consciousness. By virtue of the recognitive mediation and achievement of an enlarged mentality, oppositions between being-for-self and being-for-other are resolved into a higher, richer unity-in-and-through-difference—namely spirit, in which each term is at once identical with, in being different from, its other, and their mutual relations are possible only because they are different.

Universal singularity is also the concept of subjectivity, personhood, and freedom that Hegel affirms of God as triune. We have seen that the moments of the concept in their speculative concreteness are both identical and inseparable, on the one hand, and on the other hand, are different; thus the concept is a totality. Similarly, for Hegel the trinitarian persons are in their concreteness both inseparable and yet different. For Hegel, the antithesis of the trinitarian persons is both posited and resolved; the resolution constitutes a higher union—that is, triune absolute spirit—which is Hegel's reconstruction of theological trinitarianism.

Section 5 focuses on Hegel's further differentiation of the singularity of the concept and on correlating this differentiation with theological themes. Thus "immediate singularity" is described as a being-for-one-*only*, which is pursued as a methodological abstraction in the *Philosophy of Right*,[7] and, when the brackets are removed, it denotes the problem of evil, egocentric atomism, in both the *Logic* and the *Philosophy of Religion*.[8] In contrast to such atomistic being-for-one-only, Hegel distinguishes a "universal singularity" that is being-for-others, both as a concept of the social, and in the account of reconciliation, including his kenotic christology and the death of God.[9] These concepts are determined further in Hegel's account of the cultus examined in Sections 6 and 7, which focus on the relation of finite and infinite constitutive of the true infinite.

[5] *EL* §32Z. For the *Aufhebung* (sublation) as union with opposite or concrescence, see *SL* 107.
[6] *EL* §163.
[7] *PR* §§5–7.
[8] *SL* 172. In *LPR* 3 this being-for-one-only captures self-seeking desire. as evident in Boehme's account of the Fall of Lucifer.
[9] *LPR* 3. 133.

According to Hegel, the true infinite is the most important concept in philosophy,[10] because it overcomes the spurious infinity that continuously reinstates the dualism of finite and infinite in the very transcendence of it. An infinite that is opposed to the finite shows itself to be a finite–infinite, an infinite that merely ought to be. The true infinite includes the finite within itself, and for this reason it is systematically linked to the doctrine of the ideality of the finite, which expresses the ontological status of the finite within the infinite. It is one of the few categories of the *Logic* employed in the *Philosophy of Religion*. However, this does not necessarily imply a logical diminution of the *Philosophy of Religion* vis-à-vis the *Logic*, for the true infinite category is probably all that Hegel needs. The true infinite is (1) the speculative nucleus of his philosophy, the speculative concrete; as such (2) it sums up the dialectical holism begun in the dialectic of determinacy, something and other (logical origin of the subject), that supports and expresses the logical structure of the concept of spirit, the I that is a We; it thus articulates the structure and process of objective spirit; (3) it also clarifies the relation of finite and infinite, objective and absolute spirit, because it sublates the "bogey" of the finite–infinite dualism and opposition of reflection philosophy that has no truth;[11] (4) sublating the dualism shows that the relation of finite and infinite is one of mutual, asymmetrical inclusion, based on the doctrine of the ideality of the finite, and (5) the true infinite is the deep structure of both absolute idea and absolute spirit—to wit, God as spirit in his community. These topics are treated in Sections 6, 7, 8, and 9.

Section 8 takes up the issue of consolation (*Trost*) because for Hegel divine personhood is both the condition of consolation and its reality. Hegel sets forth his doctrine through a comparison with two others—namely, the fate piety exhibited in Greek religion and in Greek tragedy, which do without any concept of consolation or reconciliation because human subjectivity is not accorded infinite significance, and the modern view, which acknowledges the right and the worth of subjective freedom and consequently demands a compensation for its loss. However, given the relatively low "exchange values" that moderns set upon themselves and their freedom, the ancient tragic view is far more noble and comes off more favorably in Hegel's estimation. The Christian religion asserts the infinite value of personhood, and this infinite value infinitely raises the stakes of consolation. For Hegel, the personhood of God is the foundation and reality of consolation, because divine subjectivity contains the moment of particularity in itself, and so human particularity is

[10] *EL* §95R; *SL* 129–52. See also Robert Williams, *Tragedy, Recognition, and the Death of God: Studies in Hegel and Nietzsche* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pt III, ch. 6; see also Williams, "Hegel's Concept of the True Infinite," and "Hegel's True Infinity as Panentheism: A Reply to Robert Wallace," *Owl of Minerva*, 42/1–2 (2010–11), 89–122, 137–52.

[11] *LPR* 1. 309; "we must not have such absurd respect in the presence of the infinite" (*LPR* 1. 425; see also *LPR* 3. 281; *LProofs*, 125).

not something to be abstractly negated but rather preserved. Hegel explicates the infinite personhood of the Christian God in comparison with the Greek gods, who are personifications and as such subject to the higher power of incomprehensible fate.

Our analysis of this issue adds a further comparison—namely, between Hegel's view of divine consolation and the view of sympathy and compassion in classical Christian theology that conceives God as immutable and impassible in all respects. God must not suffer. In the classical view, the relation between God and world is real for the world but only ideal or represented for God. Therefore, to say that God sympathizes or has compassion means only that humans receive the effects of sympathy, compassion, and so on, but not compassion itself, because, if God were compassionate, God would be passible, capable of suffering. Hegel rejects the classical view because in his reconstruction of Christian theology the incarnation of God is central; the self-emptying kenosis of God, and Hegel's account of the death of God, all imply that God is not absolutely immutable or impassible, that God enters relation to the world, suffers, endures it, and remains God in relation.

Section 9 draws the implications of Hegel's doctrine of divine personhood, that divine personhood is both negated and preserved in the concept of absolute spirit. For Hegel, Spirit is not merely the name of one of the persons of God, but rather names the triune God as such. This is the reason why Hegel can characterize inner–trinitarian relations as relations of mutual recognition. The Christian religion is therefore not a spiritual religion in the trivial subjective sense of that term, but rather the religion of the Spirit, God existing as community constituted by love and reconciliation.

1. FROM ABSOLUTE IDEA TO ABSOLUTE SPIRIT

Our thesis is that Hegel's doctrine of the concept informs his philosophical trinitarianism (*Logic*), and his theological trinitarianism of the philosophy of spirit and philosophy of religion. The first part of this section attempts to summarize Hegel's doctrine of the concept, which occupies the entire third book of the *Science of Logic*. Those familiar with this material can skip this summary and proceed directly to the second half (pp. 241–8), which focuses on the distinction and parallels between absolute idea and absolute spirit, and owes much to Walter Jaeschke's work.[12]

[12] *RR*; see also Walter Jaeschke, "Absolute Idee—Absolute Subjektivität: Zum Problem der Persönlichkeit Gottes in der Logik und in der Religionsphilosophie," *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung*, 35/3–4 (Meisenheim and Glan: Verlag Anton Hain, 1981), 385–416.

There are several discourses Hegel uses to explicate the doctrine of the concept. The analyses of ontological proof, the absolute idea and absolute spirit, draw upon different discourses, different contradictions and resolutions. A full analysis of this vast topic would require another monograph. To begin, it should be noted that Hegel's is a term logic rather than propositional logic; the former logic facilitates the mediation of terms. The first discourse portrays the structure of the concept, which Hegel identifies with the terms universality, particularity, and singularity. These are not to be understood as three separate concepts that could be counted, but rather as moments of development of the one concept that is an articulated whole. Each moment is the entire concept and cannot be understood in separation from the others. Thus right off the bat we are confronted with the issues of the distinction between universality and particularity, which are opposites, and the dialectical mediation, which resolves their contradictory opposition—namely, singularity (*Einzelheit*), the concrete, determinate universal. Subsequently Hegel asserts that universality, particularity, and singularity correspond to the categories of identity, difference, ground.[13]

The latter categories correspond to more concrete discourses about relations that are present in and important for the concepts of personhood and spirit—namely, *being-for-self* (*Fürsichsein, independence*) and *being-for-other* (*dependence*). These contrasting terms require their own appropriate forms of mediation and resolution of their contradictions. These later, more concrete categories were foreshadowed and anticipated in the dialectic of something (*Etwas*) and other in the *Logic* of being (see Ch. 5, Sect. 3).

Further topics of the subjective logic include judgment and syllogism. Judgment means that the concept differentiates itself. It sunders its immediate universality and abstract identity into the contrast between universal and particular. It is well known that Kant's philosophy is oriented to judgment. For Hegel, judgment is both indispensable and yet insufficient as far as rationality is concerned. For to restrict philosophical inquiry to the topic of judgment is to risk absolutizing difference and falling into dualism and antinomy; reason subverts itself. That is why Hegel holds that the concept must be completed in syllogism, which is the mediated identity of identity and difference, or, more simply, a determinate unity in and through difference. Everything rational is a syllogism.

The logic of the concept includes one of the most important features of both life and spirit—namely, inner purposiveness, teleology.[14] Teleology elaborates

[13] *EL* §§160–4. Hegel's *Logic* is a term logic, rather than propositional logic.

[14] Hegel distinguishes between external means/end teleology, in which means and end are external to each other, and inner purposiveness in which the end brings forth the means and the means bring forth the end (*LPR* 1. 429). He credits Kant with rediscovering Aristotle's entelechy, while criticizing him for treating teleology merely as a subjective maxim of judgment. See *EL* §204.

not only development of the concept from abstract to concrete, but also the self-production of organism; teleology means the self-maintenance of the whole.[15] The self-maintenance of the whole is guided by the concept itself as final cause. Need and drive are examples of purposive activity, which is oriented towards realization of an end, purpose. Need and drive, short of the realization of their purpose, are experienced as contradiction. Drive aims at carrying out the end or purpose. The satisfaction of the need is equivalent to realization of purpose.

Every satisfaction of the drive is for the I a process of sublating its subjectivity, positing its subjective or inner being as external, objective, and real: the process of bringing forth the unity of what is only subjective with the objective, that strips away the one-sidedness of both. All the action in the world is a sublating of the subjective and a positing of the objective, producing the unity of both. In as much as it differentiated, and what is living must be differentiated, the concept is what, as living, negates the (merely) subjective need/end and posits it objectively.[16] Objectivity is no longer opposed to the concept but rather its realization. Hegel developed this point in his defense of the ontological proof, that God can only be thought as existing (see Ch. 3, nn. 64, 101).

Our investigation has shown that, while Hegel's treatment of the traditional ontological proof is sympathetic, he also acknowledges that the form of the proof is defective. For Hegel, the traditional proof adds a predicate (that is, being, existence, actuality) to the (subjective) concept. It does so by appealing to a concept of perfection: the inference from concept to its existence is mediated by a presupposed idea of perfection—namely, that what is perfect must be, must exist. The traditional proof, while fundamentally correct, does not "afford satisfaction for reason, since this presupposition is precisely what is at issue."[17] Further, the reasoning is circular, because the unity of concept and reality is the definition of both perfection and the concept of God. This presupposition of the unity of concept and reality must be justified, and Hegel undertakes to do so by appealing to his logic of the concept, which shows that "the concept is the movement by which it determines itself to be, that the concept is this dialectical movement of self-determination into being, or into its own opposite."[18] "This insight, which is not present—and could not occur—in Anselm . . . is an insight into the extent to which *the concept itself sublates its one-sidedness*."[19] Hegel transforms the original ontological proof from an inference from a subjective mental concept to its existence, into an account of a self-mediating concept or totality: "in its own right the idea is essentially concrete, because it is the free concept that determines itself, and in so doing makes itself real."[20]

[15] See *ILH* 267–72. [16] *LPR* 3. 271: *Absolut Aktuosität*. [17] *LPR* 3. 182.
[18] *LPR* 3. 181. [19] *LPR* 3. 182; emphasis added. [20] *EL* §213R.

Hegel's concept possesses inner purposiveness. What the concept produces is itself. The singularity (*Einzelheit*) of the concept is the same as its actuality, but it is *an actuality that has issued from the concept*.[21] He clarifies this by a contrast between subjective representation and concept:

> All that is meant by the indeterminate word "reason," "rational insight" is, not that within me there is anything that is certain and stands fast, but that there is within me *that which stands fast for itself, objective in and for itself*, established within me, i.e., *it is grounded within itself, is determined in and for itself*. Such, however is the pure concept.[22]

Hegel's concept of the concept provides the structure and dialectical process of the absolute idea—the self-mediating unity of concept and objectivity.[23]

Second, our investigation has also brought to light that Hegel's critique of abstract metaphysics of the understanding includes Spinoza's metaphysics of substance, the abstract undifferentiated identity, and involves the related concepts of negation, contradiction, and subjectivity. Spinoza's theory of determination as negation (*omnis determinatio est negatio*) implies that there is only one substance. Abstract substance metaphysics defrauds the difference of its due.[24] As we have seen, Hegel inverts Spinoza: *negatio est determinatio*. This theory of negation requires a doctrine of subjectivity, for only subjectivity is capable of *determinate negation* that both cancels and preserves what is cancelled on a higher level (the *Aufhebung*). Hegel's concept of determinate negation is the affirmative moment of dialectic.[25] Hegel's overcoming of Spinoza's objective dogmatism requires that substance become subject—that is, concept—for only rational subjectivity can plumb the depths of the difference without negating all difference, as in monism, and without absolutizing the difference, as in dualism. Thus Hegel's concept is the true infinite that emerges as a third trinitarian alternative to abstract monism and to abstract dualism.[26]

Third, as we have seen, the essential feature of Hegel's holism is its concept of the concept, the third phase or moment of which is Hegel's anti-formalist, anti-antimetaphysical corrective—namely, its singularity (*Einzelheit*). Singularity is the concrete universality that overcomes and unites abstract universality and abstract particularity in a concrete unity in and through difference. Hegel's critique of the abstract universal takes in both the objective dogmatism of traditional metaphysics ("the abstraction of the highest being"[27]) and the subjective dogmatism of Kant's critical philosophy, which considers the idea of God to be transcendent *Jenseits*. For Hegel, "life, spirit, God, the pure

[21] *EL* §163; cf. *LPR* 1. 437.
[22] *LPR* 1. 249–50. The concept *stands fast for itself* is objective *in and for itself*. These terms echo and reflect the self-grounding, self-realizing concept, the principle of the ontological proof.
[23] *EL* §§192–3, 213–14. [24] *EL* §§50, 95R, 151Z.
[25] *EL* §§80–2. [26] See *HSL* 226. [27] *SL* 609.

concept itself, are beyond the grasp of abstraction, because abstraction deprives its products of *singularity*, of the principle of individuality and personhood, and so arrives at nothing else but universalities devoid of life, spirit, color and filling."[28] A teleological critique and surpassing of substance metaphysics is inherent in Hegel's reconstruction of the ontological argument: The consummation of absolute substance "is no longer substance itself, but something higher, the concept, the subject."[29] Not only is the absolute its own ontological proof; the proof now concludes not with the abstract universal, or absolute necessity, but rather with the unveiling of necessity by freedom, and the unveiling of substance as concept or subject.[30]

For Hegel; "the idea is *at first* just the One and universal *substance*, but its developed authentic actuality is to be as *subject* and so as spirit."[31] That is, Hegel's reconstruction of the ontological proof is intended to show not merely that the concept or absolute idea *is*, or that it is *living*, but also that it is self-actualizing subject, or *spirit*. While it is important to understand that God is living, nevertheless God is more than living, God is spirit:

> The organic formations and their purposive determinations belong to a higher circle, to life. But apart from the fact that the study of living nature and of the fitness of things to purposes . . . can be vitiated by the triviality of purposes . . . that are outright childish, so nature itself as merely alive is still not really that in terms of which the genuine determination of the idea of God can be grasped. *God is more than living; God is spirit*.[32]

Fourth, at the conclusion of Chapter 5, we learned that, while Hegel's concept of personhood is the singularity of the concept, singularity itself undergoes a further important qualification, both in the *Encyclopedia* analysis of the concept, and in the *Philosophy of Right* and the *Philosophy of Religion*. Namely, Hegel takes pains to distinguish the singularity of the concept from *immediate* singularity. Immediate singularity is essentially tied to abstract being-for-self (*Fürsichsein*) and abstract unity: "the immediacy or being of the one, because it is the negation of all otherness, is posited as being no longer determinable and alterable; such therefore is its absolute unyielding rigidity that all determination, variety, conjunction remains for it an utterly external relation."[33] Abstract being-for-self excludes relation or mediation. That is, *Fursichsein* is ambiguous; if it remains immediate and abstract, it acts as if the other did not exist; it amounts to withdrawal into self; it is to exclude others or even turn against them. It is being-for-self-*only*. Hegel condemns this pursuit

[28] *SL* 619. I have revised the translation, which conflates *Einzelheit* (singularity) and individuality.
[29] *SL* 579–80. See *EL* §242. [30] *EL* §§156–9. [31] *EL* §213.
[32] *EL* §50R; emphasis added.
[33] *SL* 166, remark on atomism. Cf. also Hegel's analysis of the One as a self-contradictory concept: the moments that constitute the concept of the one as being-for-self fall asunder in the development (*SL* 163–4).

of self-subsistence to the point of abstract exclusive unity as not only abstract, formal, and self-destructive, but also as the supreme, most stubborn error that takes itself for the highest truth, manifesting in more concrete forms as pure freedom, pure ego, and as evil.[34] It is also manifest in the beautiful soul that withdraws into itself in pursuit of purity, regards action in the world and with others as if it were defilement, and never becomes actual.

In contrast, the singularity of the concept is not immediate, but a mediated *universal singularity*.[35] The universal singularity involves a further step beyond abstract being-for-self—namely, a mediation of *being-for-self* with *being-for-other*, where each is identical with, in being different from, its other. This further step consists in opening up being-for-self to otherness, and in adopting a larger perspective that takes appropriate account of others and achieves determinate modes of being-for-other(s). In this mediation the "I" is developed into its totality,[36] or, in the language of the *Phenomenology*, the I becomes a We. The concept of personhood, taken as immediate singularity, still contains a deficiency, an abstractness. However, when personhood is mediated and sublated—it is both negated in its deficiency and preserved on a higher level in an affirmative enlarged mentality. Here being-for-self and being-for-other are not exclusive, but rather mutually inclusive in an enlarged mentality that is identity in and through difference. In other words, personhood is sublated in spirit: "The highest intensity of the subject in the ideality of all concrete determinations, and of the highest antitheses, is spirit."[37] "*What is absolutely concrete is the spirit*."[38]

Hegel's dialectical doctrine of the concept does more than unify the subjective concept with objectivity and actuality in the ontological proof. It also provides the logical structure and dialectic of the concept of spirit. Walter Jaeschke has helpfully distinguished the absolute idea (Logic) from the concept of absolute spirit. The two terms, while related, are not the same, because the latter, in addition to the logical categories, also employs categories drawn from the *Realphilosophies* of nature and spirit. Stated otherwise, the absolute idea is the ultimate category and expression of Hegel's philosophical trinitarianism, and the absolute spirit is the ultimate category of Hegel's theological trinitarianism, which effects a synthesis of the living God of the absolute idea with Hegel's profound analyses of tragic evil, reconciling love, incarnation, mutual recognition, and spirit. When Hegel wrote that the life of spirit is not a life that shrinks from death and keeps itself untouched by devastation, but rather the life that endures it and maintains itself in it, winning its truth only when in utter dismemberment it finds itself,[39] he made it clear that in his view absolute spirit (that is, the God of Christianity) is not an impassible absolute, but has to be understood as a living God, and that the living God is not only

[34] *SL* 172. [35] *EL* §163R; *PR* §7R+Z. [36] *EL* §159R.
[37] *LProofs*, 80. [38] *EL* §164R; emphasis added. [39] *PhS* §32.

not jealous, but self-communicating, manifest in self-emptying self-sacrificing love that goes to the point of death for the sake of reconciliation. In this brief narrative Hegel's philosophical trinitarianism and his theological trinitarianism are evident and inseparable. Both are parallel but distinct expressions of the concept.

Hegel conceives absolute spirit (*Geist*) as corresponding to the absolute idea—for example, the primal division of the idea (the differentiation of the concept) in judgment (*Urteil*), the constitution of opposition between the infinite and finite, and its reconciliation–*Aufhebung* in syllogism. These general logical patterns are expressed in Hegel's concept of absolute spirit. There are both parallels and differences. Thus, where the absolute idea *differentiates* itself, spirit *doubles* itself (exhibiting the dialectic of the something and other), *objectifies* itself in its other (being-for-other), and in this other spirit recognizes itself and loves itself and other in this union. Ever since the *Early Theological Writings*, doubling (*Verdoppelung*)—whether of life or of consciousness, or of determinate being—implies immanent distinctions and oppositions. This implies that both identity and difference are essential to an articulated whole, which includes reciprocal mediation between the whole and its members.[40]

In his *Philosophy of Religion* Hegel interprets the absolute idea both as logical metaphysics and as speculative philosophical theology.[41] His reason for making the latter explicit is not furnished only by the *Logic*. Jaeschke asserts that for Hegel "the point at which the religious idea of God is seen to be identical with the highest idea of logic is attained within the history of religion itself, in the consummate religion."[42] However, Hegel goes beyond asserting simple equivalence between the absolute idea of the logic and the religious idea of God. Hegel claims that the absolute idea is infinite subjectivity—that is, absolute spirit—by appealing to the immanent logic of the concept: "Truth consists in objectivity being adequate to the concept; but *what is adequate to the concept is only the concept itself insofar as it has itself as its counterpart or object*."[43]

What does the counterpart of the idea mean? It suggests a move to a social–recognitive model of spirit. It means that, like the concept and its moments, the Idea is self-determining and self-differentiating. But this is still abstract.[44] Spirit is a more concrete, mediated term than absolute idea. It is spirit that has a *counterpart*. That is, spirit doubles itself, objectifies itself, and remains identical with itself in its differentiation—that is, in its other: "The content of religion is that God is simply object to himself, but is purely and simply

[40] "Fragment on Love," *ETW*, 305; see also *PhS* §§175, 177, 178, 772.
[41] *EL* §§ 213–14; *LProofs*, 99, 104. [42] *RR* 300. [43] *LPR* 3. 269; emphasis added.
[44] See Hegel's critique of abstraction. *SL* 605–22.

identical with himself in this differentiation; and so he is spirit, absolute spirit."[45]

According to Jaeschke, Hegel's reconstruction of "the history of religion leads up to the christological idea that has been central ever since his *Early Theological Writings*— namely, that 'the divine nature is the same as the human, and it is in this unity that it is beheld [*angeschaut*].'"[46] In Hegel's philosophy of religion, the "counterpart" also has an incarnational—Christological–trinitarian sense. Jaeschke points out that, in Hegel's metaphysical interpretation of Christianity, incarnation is interpreted ontologically in several important senses, beginning with the assertion of the *Phenomenology* about the recognition that absolute being is present in a human being who "is sensuously and directly beheld as a self, an actual individual human being."[47] Again, "this self-consciousness is not imaginary, but is actual in the believer. Consciousness does not start from its inner life, from thought, and unite within itself the thought of God with existence; on the contrary it starts from an existence that is immediately present and recognizes God therein."[48] Hegel passes from this christological determination of the content of the revelatory religion to the conceptualization of absolute being as a subsisting object that immediately has the significance of pure thought. "It is known as thought and likewise as a subsisting self-consciousness."[49] Jaeschke's point is that, in the history and philosophy of religion, "the identity of thought and being is attained *otherwise* than in the ontological proof. What this proof undertakes to demonstrate—the identity of thought and being—is . . . *already actualized* in Christianity and as having entered into actual self-consciousness . . . "[50] For Hegel, the Christian recognition of God's incarnate divine–human unity is the historical–religious source of both the ontological proof and the concept of triune absolute spirit.

Thus the *Philosophy of Religion* has its own source for the claim that what is adequate to the concept is only the concept itself—namely, the ontological *principle* of divine–human unity—the concept of incarnation. This both broadens and re-contextualizes the unity of concept and reality established in the ontological proof, as a holistic theological conception relevant to the doctrine of trinity, and points toward the concept of spirit as an historical and social organism constituted by reciprocal interactions of whole and its

[45] *LPR* 3. 359. [46] *RR* 204–5, citing *PhS* §759.

[47] *PhS* §758. The basic meaning of incarnation is divine–human unity in and through difference, and there are many examples of this in the history of religion that Hegel discusses. However, it is the distinctiveness of the Christian version of incarnation that underlies Hegel's major claims that in the consummate religion the concept of religion (divine–human unity in and through difference) has become objective to itself, and that this ontotheological objectification and identity in difference is the consummate form of the religious principle.

[48] *PhS* §758. [49] *RR* 205. [50] *RR* 205; emphasis added.

members. The 1824 Lectures put the transition from absolute idea to absolute spirit in this expansive yet determinate way:

> the concept in itself is real, wholly free totality, free totality present to itself. The one side, spirit, the subjective side, the concept, is itself the idea, while the other side, reality, is likewise the whole or spirit posited at the same time as distinct. Reality is thus the reality of the idea itself, in such a way that *each side is the idea*, the free idea, present to itself, so that *spirit, this idea, knows itself, is present to itself. It is real, places itself vis-à-vis itself as another spirit, and is then the unity of the two. And this is what the idea is*.[51]

Note the identification of idea and spirit. In this passage the absolute idea is a totality with immanent distinctions, two sides and modalities, each of which is the idea itself. However, this passage ends not with the unity of concept and reality or concept and objectivity that constitutes the absolute idea of the *Logic*, but rather with infinite or absolute spirit. In support of this interpretation, Jaeschke cites an excerpt from Hegel's 1831 Lectures preserved by David Friedrich Strauß: "we do not have here the abstract logical identity of concept and being as immediates; what we have in this relationship between the two sides of the ontological proof is *God as spirit itself*."[52] This excerpt shows Hegel's distinction between the traditional ontological argument, expressed in substance metaphysics, and his reconstruction of it as a social organic unity. For it is not the traditional proof, but rather Hegel's *reconstruction* of it that consists in an organic, recognitive relationship between the two sides, for both are spirit.

For Hegel, the term spirit, like the term love, implies a relation to other in which an opposition is both posited and resolved. Like life, love is constituted by the production and resolution of contradiction. This is clear from Hegel's beginnings in the *Early Theological Writings*. Moreover, for Hegel, love's resolution of its contradiction is not a collapse of love's double into an undifferentiated unity: "In love the separate does still remain, no longer as something separated, but as united . . . "[53] "The beloved is no longer opposed to us; he is one with our being. We see only ourselves in him and yet he is *not*

[51] *LPR* 3. 186; emphasis added.

[52] *LPR* 3. 361, cited partially by Jaeschke (*RR* 302); emphasis added. Jaeschke wants to avoid conflating the absolute subjectivity of the *Logic* with absolute spirit of *the Philosophy of Religion*; he argues that the former is a consciousness of method that falls short of both persons and personhood. For Jaeschke, personhood presupposes serious otherness, which is excluded from the *Logic* as pure thought. Much depends on how "serious" the opposition between thought and being is—i.e., how dark the shadow cast by nihilism is and whether it is susceptible to sublation by the concept in the ontological proof of Hegel's philosophical trinitarianism. On the other hand, while Hegel maintains that the *Logic* does not deal with self-conscious spirit, and that the logical form of the concept is independent of its non-spiritual and spiritual shapes, he also asserts that the pure concept constitutes the ground plan and framework of the shapes of spirit (*SL* 586; *LProofs*, 81). Universal singularity is not a person, but it is relevant to persons and personhood.

[53] "Fragment on Love," *ETW*, 305; translation modified.

who we are—a miracle that we cannot comprehend."[54] Later in the *Philosophy of Right* Hegel writes in a similar vein:

> Love means in general the consciousness of my union with another, so that I am not isolated on my own, but gain my self-consciousness only through the renunciation of my independent existence [*meines Fürsichseins*] and through *knowing myself as the unity of myself with another and of the other with me*.... The first moment in love is that I do not wish to be an independent person in my own right and that, if I were, I would feel deficient and incomplete in my independence. The second moment is that I find myself in another person, that I count for her and that she counts for me. Love is therefore the most intense contradiction; the understanding cannot resolve it.[55]

In the *Philosophy of Religion* Hegel observes that "everything concrete, everything living contains contradiction within itself; only the dead understanding is identical with itself. But the contradiction is also resolved in the idea and the resolution is a spiritual unity."[56] This means that self-relation (*Fürsichsein*) is *mediated* by relation to and self-recognition in an other. For Hegel freedom, like love, means being at home with self in one's other. Love, freedom, and spirit are actual only in and as community.

Thus the 1824 passage on trinity we have been examining has to be taken seriously—to wit, spirit is present to itself in an other (spirit), and is mediated by other and emerges in reciprocal relation to and interaction with other. Absolute spirit, as true infinite, has for Hegel intersubjective, communal, and religious significance. Although he does not comment on the 1824 passage just cited, Walter Jaeschke nevertheless nails down its central logical point: "this subjectivity for which spirit is, is not to remain something external to spirit, but rather is itself to be absolute and infinite subjectivity, infinite form (*LPR* 3. 269). *It is characteristic of both concepts that they cannot belong to one side of the [religious] relationship alone.*"[57] For Hegel, relationship is inherently reciprocal and holistic—that is, a one-sided or one-term relationship is no relation at all.[58]

In other words, at its most fundamental level, not only religion but theology itself assumes a social–communal form and relations. Religion for Hegel essentially involves community in several senses and levels. First, spirit itself is a community in the aforementioned logical sense wherein the moments of the concept are inseparable, a unity in and through difference, or true infinite. In Christian thought this unity in and through difference in God is immanent trinity. But the immanent trinity presupposes and is derived from the implications of divine incarnation, also divine–human unity in and

[54] "Fragment on Love and Religion," *ETW*, in *Werke*, 1. 244.
[55] *PR* §158Z; translation modified. [56] *LPR* 3. 192–3.
[57] *RR* 301; emphasis added. [58] *LProofs*, 66. Cf. *EL* §§35–6.

through difference.[59] Trinity articulates the "God who differentiates himself but remains identical with himself in this process of differentiation."[60] This dialectical interpretation of incarnate divine–human unity cancels and sublates abstract universality, abstract transcendence and abstract substance; this sublation effects the shift from abstract substance devoid of selfhood to subject, which is a shift from abstract impersonal transcendence to divine personhood and immanence. As Hegel puts it in lecture: "Through faith we know that this individual has a divine nature, and in that way God as the abstract beyond [*Jenseits*] is superseded."[61] Third, God is spirit in his community, the cultus. Shared by all three is a concept of community that for Hegel is constituted by mutual and reciprocal self-recognition in other,[62] which accounts for both the freedom and the relative independence of its members vis-à-vis each other and the whole, and the presence of the whole in its members. Absolute spirit is spirit in its community.[63] Hegel claims that the consciousness of finite spirit is the material, the concrete being in which the concept of God and God's purpose is realized, recognized, and venerated:

> The purpose . . . of God . . . can be nothing else than God himself: that his concept should become objective for him and then return within him, that he should possess himself in what is realized. . . . But if we speak of purpose, then it cannot be mere power. The soil in which this purpose is to be found cannot be anything else but spirit as such. . . . [God] is his own purpose—the purpose being that he should be recognized and venerated [as God].[64]

Hegel's claim implies that the relation of God to finite spirit is a recognitive relation of spirit to spirit[65] and takes the shape of community.

[59] Hegel points out that the term incarnation in the history of religion means divine–human unity. As such it is much broader than the Christian version, and Hegel refers to ancient Greek religion of art and Hindu concepts of avatars as examples. However, it is also the case that Hegel believes and asserts that the Christian version is the logical and historical consummation of the concept of divine–human unity as divine–human identity. For an interpretation of the latter in classical Lutheran theology and its elaboration of the christological doctrine of *communicatio idiomatum*, see Eberhard Jüngel, *God as Mystery of the World*, trans. Darrel Guder (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmanns, 1983).

[60] *LPR* 3. 192. For further analysis of trinity, cf. Sect. 2.

[61] *LPR* 3. 316 n. 175.

[62] Note, the immanent trinity is portrayed in *PhS* §772 as a loving recognition.

[63] *E.* §554.

[64] *LPR* 2. 434. Hegel's assertion that God's purpose is that he should be recognized and venerated as God, implies that a personal God desires and demands recognition. Hegel's language anticipates the opening lines of Anton Bruckner's Famous *Te Deum* (1886), a widely and highly regarded hymn of thanksgiving: "Te Deum, laudamus, te Dominium confitemur." "We praise you, O God, we *acknowledge* you as Lord." While there is no direct connection between Bruckner and Hegel, the *Te Deum*, described by Gustav Mahler as music "for the tongues of angels, God-seekers, tormented hearts and souls purified in the fire," is a magnificent musical expression of the recognition and veneration of God that Hegel identifies as both the divine and the human purpose of religion.

[65] *LPR* 1. 383.

A communal relation presupposes and involves both the identity and the difference of its members. This communal relation is structurally similar to mutual—reciprocal recognition, as is evident from the following passage:

> The object of our concern, the community and communion (*Gemeinschaft*) of God and humanity with each other, is a community of spirit with spirit; and it involves the most important questions. It is a community, and this very circumstance involves the difficulty of *both holding fast to the difference*, *while also determining it in such a way that the community is preserved*. That humanity knows God implies, *in accord with the essence of community*, a *communal knowledge*; that is to say, humanity knows God only insofar as God knows godself in humanity. This knowledge is God's self-consciousness, but it is at the same time a knowledge of God on the part of humanity; and this knowledge of God by humanity is the knowledge of humanity by God. The spirit of humanity—to know God—is simply God's Spirit itself.[66]

If community here is a relation of spirit to spirit, and if genuine relation has to be reciprocal,[67] then this relation includes communal knowing, something like mutual self-recognition in other. As Hegel indicates, this communal spirit-to-spirit knowing in divine self-communication supersedes divine jealousy and envy, and all notions that God is aloof, unknowable, or demonic.[68] This clarifies Hegel's claim that the consummate religion is one in which the concept of religion has become objective to itself.

> It is this concept that constitutes the concept of religion. We define God when we say that he distinguishes himself from himself and is an object for himself but that in this distinction he is purely identical with himself—that he is *spirit*. This concept is now realized; consciousness knows this content and knows that it is utterly interwoven with this content: in the concept that is the process of God, consciousness is itself a moment. Finite consciousness knows God only to the extent that God knows himself in it; thus God is spirit, indeed the Spirit of his community, i.e., of those who worship him. This is the consummate religion, the concept that has become objective to itself. Here it is manifest what God is: he is no longer a "beyond," an unknown . . . [69]

Hegel's main theological themes of religion as divine–human community, Absolute spirit, divine personhood, love, reconciliation, and freedom all embody the true infinite, the affirmative moment of dialectic, the negation of negation.[70] Hegel's theology of reconciliation requires and presupposes the personhood of God. On the one hand, the *Philosophy of Religion* presupposes and incorporates Hegel's revised ontological argument as absolute idea, the

[66] *LProofs*, 14th lecture, 126; emphasis added. [67] *LProofs*, 66.
[68] *LProofs*, 67–8. Hegel adds: "It is as absurd to give such notions a place as it is to say of the Christian religion that through it God has been revealed to humanity, and yet to maintain that what has been revealed is that God is not and has not been revealed."
[69] *LPR* 3. 249–50 n. 3. [70] *EL* §82.

unity of concept and objectivity; on the other hand, as the concluding discipline of the philosophy of spirit, it recognizes and portrays the personhood of absolute spirit that is the objective foundation of reconciliation—that is, that God is love. The divine–human unity of christology requires completion and fulfillment in trinity—that is, "that God distinguishes himself from himself and is object for himself, but that in this differentiation remains identical with himself—that he is spirit."

2. PERSONHOOD AND TRINITY: BEYOND TRITHEISM AND MODALISM

A. Hegel's Criticism of Rationalist Critiques of Trinity

We have frequently had occasion to note Hegel's criticism of the understanding.[71] The understanding isolates and abstracts terms from their context, considers them as true in their separation and isolation, "purified" by means of the abstract concepts of identity and universality, and conceived in accordance with the law of non-contradiction. The law of non-contradiction is taken as the criterion of logical possibility. Something is possible only if it contains no contradiction. Whatever contains a contradiction violates that law; therefore, it must be impossible.

Hegel observes that, by this criterion, "nothing is more impossible that the fact that I am, because the I is at once both simple self-relation [*Beziehung auf sich*] and absolutely relation to other [*schlechthin Beziehung auf Anderes*]."[72] The same principle holds true for everything in the natural and spiritual world. For example, matter is "impossible" (because it is the unity of repulsion and attraction); life and living things that contain and endure contradiction are "impossible," as is right (grounded in the mutual recognition in which the self's relation to itself is mediated by an other, and the self is for-itself in the being-for-self of another and vice versa); moreover, freedom—defined as being-at-home-with-oneself-in-another—is "impossible"; further, as we have seen, love is defined as the unity of myself with another and of the other with me; love therefore is "impossible" because it contains "a tremendous

[71] See *EL* §§32, 79–80. Of course, Hegel does not only criticize the understanding; he also acknowledges that it is indispensable for bringing fixity and determinacy to both theory and practice (*EL* §80Z). However, it runs into trouble when it is taken separately from reason, and allowed to develop its own views consistently, for then it overturns and subverts itself, leaving us, as Hume (and Jacobi) acknowledged, with the choice between a false reason and none at all. Quite so, and that is why Hegel holds that the understanding must not be separated from reason (*SL* 612; cf. 605–18.)

[72] *EL* §143Z.

contradiction" that "the understanding cannot resolve."[73] Further, God is "impossible," because God as defined by the ontological proof is the "impossible" unity of concept and existence, and God as absolute spirit remains identical with godself in absolute difference from godself—the death of God is the death of death.

Indeed, the most "egregious violation" of the law of non-contradiction within this long line of "logical impossibilities" is the Christian triune God, because its claim that three persons are constitutive of one God literally does not "add up." The trinity has been rejected by Enlightenment rationalism in accordance with its basic principles, because trinity is allegedly an expression that cannot be thought without contradiction.[74] Hegel observes that the rationalism of modern philosophy has emptied theology of all content—for example, trinity—and replaced it with the ultimate abstraction—the vacuous concept of the highest being. Kant delivered the *coup de grâce* to natural theology by declaring that the transcendent concept of the highest being is an empty, unknowable *Jenseits*. For Kant, contradiction is subjective, in our thought, not in the things themselves. Hegel thinks that Kant transforms the objective dogmatism of classical metaphysics into the subjective dogmatism of critical philosophy, which regards contradiction as subjective—that is, symptomatic of human metaphysical illusion and mental derangement.

However, for Hegel everything living includes contradiction, endures it, and resolves it. Hegel declares that

> whoever claims that nothing exists which carries in itself a contradiction in the form of an identity of opposites is at the same time requiring that nothing living shall exist. For the power of life, and still more the might of the spirit, consists precisely in positing contradiction in itself, enduring it, and overcoming it. This positing and resolving of the contradiction between the ideal unity and the real separatedness of the members constitutes the constant process of life. . . . Through this unity of double activity all the members of the organism are constantly upheld and constantly brought to the ideality of their animation. . . . the members display this ideality forthwith in the fact that *their animated unity is not indifferent to them, but on the contrary is the substance in which and through which alone they can preserve their particular individuality*. This is precisely what constitutes the essential difference between the part of a whole and the member of an organism.[75]

Hegel draws upon his systematic concepts of holism and organism, not only in his concept of dialectical syllogism, but also in his reconstruction of the doctrine of the trinity and reply to rationalist charges that it is contradictory and impossible.

[73] *PR* §158Z. [74] *EL* §143Z. [75] *Aesthetics*, 1. 120; emphasis added.

Hegel concedes that it is easy to find contradictions in all speculative concepts—for example, not only in the trinity, but also in love and the absolute idea.[76] However, this criticism depends on taking trinity primarily in a numerical, quantitative sense, that introduces distortions. Hegel comments on the tendency towards metaphysical atomism on the part of the understanding: "Only the absolute autonomy of the numerical one hovers before the understanding, signifying absolute separation and splintering. But logical consideration shows the numerical one rather to be dialectical in itself and not something autonomous and genuine."[77] He observes that the term "trinity" or "triune" (*Dreieinig*) suggests a number series (1, 2, 3) such that counting is an appropriate way to understand it. But understood in this manner the claim that "three equals one" not only does not add up; it appears to be contradictory and untrue.[78] However, to reach this conclusion, quantitative and numerical criteria must be granted paramount cognitive importance. But Hegel replies that numerical form and measure are not only misleading,[79] but also fundamentally unsuitable for holding and thinking conceptual determinations and distinctions, because the understanding

> has the unit [(*das Eins*] for its principle [and] converts them [the conceptual determinations and distinctions] as counted into completely isolated and mutually indifferent determinations. . . . However] the truth is that different determinate concepts [Universal, particular, singular], far from falling apart into number, are simply only one and the same concept.[80]

While the moments of the concept are inseparable, they remain different and irreducible. Hegel invokes the logic of the concept, according to which "each of

[76] *LPR* 3. 192; *EL* §214R.

[77] *LPR* 3. 81–2. Cf. *SL* 613. For his connection of abstract unity with metaphysical atomism and the social contract theory of the state, cf. *EL* §98.

[78] William Desmond reaches a similar conclusion, not about the Christian trinity, but about Hegel's *Logic*, which Desmond reads as a dialectical monism. Like Enlightenment rationalists, Desmond proposes a mathematical test and critique of Hegel's logic. He asks: "Can Hegel really count to two or count to a real two? This seems a ridiculous question since Hegel is notorious for his stress on the number three, and all its trinitarian implications. I ask the question in all seriousness. . . . we can say this: Hegel counts to three, but in dialectically counting to three, he is finally counting to one; the third turns out to be the first; for the second, in dialectically turning into the third, also turns out to be the first; three turns out to be one, two turns out to be one, hence Hegel does not finally count beyond one at all" (Desmond, *Beyond Hegel and Dialectic* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1992), 11). Desmond's conclusion illustrates Hegel's point that arithmetic is non-dialectical, it separates as it counts (*HSL* 415). He fails to appreciate Hegel's holism is a unity in and through difference that cannot be understood by counting, because this converts the organic unity of the concept "as *counted* into completely isolated and mutually indifferent determinations" (*SL* 613). For further discussion of Desmond, cf. Robert Williams, "Double Transition, Dialectic and Recognition," in Philip Grier (ed.), *Identity and Difference: Studies in Hegel's Logic, Philosophy of Spirit and Politics* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2007), 31–61.

[79] "What has misled logicians . . . is primarily the quantitative relationship in which universality, particularity and individuality are supposed to stand to one another" (*SL* 617).

[80] *SL* 612–13.

the moments of the concept is the whole that it is, and is posited as inseparable from it, the concept is a *totality*."[81] Difference is one constitutive principle of totality; identity is another. The totality itself is not simply unity, but a *determinate* unity in and through difference.[82]

Hegel addresses some fundamental logical–theological issues resolved in the concept as totality in his discussion of the triune God. Hegel claims that "God both differentiates himself and remains identical with himself in this process of differentiation."[83] This identity in and through difference corresponds to the dialectical syllogism of the concept, and he connects the trinity with it:

> God is the trinity, i.e., he is the course of life that consists in being the universal that has being in and for itself, or in differentiating itself and then in setting itself over against itself, yet in so doing, being identical with itself—in a word, it consists in being this *syllogism*.[84]

The claim that God is self-differentiating and remains identical in his differentiation posits immanent distinctions in God's being that are at the same time also one—to wit, triunity is a unity-in-and-through-difference. Both identity and difference are necessary structures of this totality. Suppress the identity, and the whole disintegrates into isolated fragments; suppress the difference and the whole collapses into abstract unity, monism and undifferentiated identity.[85]

Hegel's reconstruction of the trinity as a quasi-dialectical syllogism/organic totality is a "deconstruction" of the categories employed by Enlightenment formal–mathematical rationalism: "Reason can employ all the relationships of the understanding, but only insofar as it destroys the forms of the understanding. And so it is with the trinity."[86] Namely, speculative reason deconstructs the self-subverting rationalism based on formal syllogism and law of non-contradiction, and reconstructs it systematically as dialectical holism.

Further, Hegel indicates the problems inherent in the abstract concept of unity are if anything magnified by the claim that God not only is triune (*dreieinige*) but subsists in *three persons*. At issue is the very concept of person and personhood itself because in it being-for-self (*Fürsichsein*) appears intractable to mediation and sublation. Hegel explains:

> This [trinity]is being-for-self [*Fürsichsein*] taken to the extreme, the extreme being not only *one*, but *person*, personhood. *Being a person is the highest intensity*

[81] *EL* §§160–3. [82] *LPR* 1. 379–80. [83] *LPR* 3. 192 (1824).

[84] *LPR* 3. 369 (1831); emphasis added. Elsewhere Hegel asserts that the understanding's concept of God corresponds to deism, whereas the Christian trinity corresponds to "reason's concept of God" (*EL* §182Z) because it exhibits in symbolic representational form the rational syllogism, in contrast to the abstract "splintered" syllogism of formal logic. For Hegel "everything rational is a syllogism" (*SL* 664–5; *EL* §181).

[85] See Errol Harris, *Formal, Transcendental and Dialectical Thinking* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1987), ch. 8.

[86] *LPR* 3. 192

> *of being-for-self*. Here the contradiction is pushed so far that no resolution, no mingling of one person with another is possible. But just this resolution is expressed in the assertion that God is only one; the three persons are thus posited merely as a transient moment or aspect. Personhood expresses the fact that the antithesis [of persons] is to be taken as absolute.[87]

Being a person is the highest intensity of being-for-self—the rugged, utterly self-sufficient individual. But, as we have seen, it is only half the story, and thus an abstraction.

If this one-sided concept of abstract personhood is presupposed in thinking trinity, the result is tritheism. Hegel observes that, "in religion, if one holds fast to personality in the abstract sense, then one has three gods, and subjectivity is likewise lost. Infinite form, infinite power is then all there is to the moment of divinity."[88] The abstract one-sided concept of personhood as being-for-self excludes any mingling of persons; this leads to tritheism, the self-subversion of the classical doctrine of trinity. Further, the concept of divine unity either disappears entirely, or becomes an unknown substratum, an unknowable divine essence. This lapses into substance metaphysics.[89] The deeper problem is the loss of subjectivity. If the loss of subjectivity is taken distributively, then the three "persons" are emptied of content and become mere masks assumed by an impersonal divine unity. If the loss of subjectivity is taken collectively as applying to God's essence, then all that is left to constitute the "essence" of God is indeterminate infinite power, which might be not only non-purposive but demonic.[90] Moreover, the loss of subjectivity reintroduces the concept of an unknowable divine essence or substratum of classical theology and substance metaphysics. As Walter Jaeschke observes, abstract personhood imported into theology results in "a triad that stands in a difficult to explain relation to the essential divine unity."[91] He points out additional difficulties in classical trinitarianism—namely, it shares the intellectual assumptions of the Gnostics in its polemics against them. Against the Gnostics, trinitarians asserted God in three persons. However,

> to the extent that theology holds fast to divine persons, it cannot conceive the trinity as a universal idea. From the perspective of speculative thinking, [classical] theology stands with the Gnostics (whose mistake was to think of the universal as a particular), despite all its differences from them. In regard to the Gnostics Hegel could say the same thing he did of prior forms of trinitarian thought: "the

[87] *LPR* 3. 193–4; emphasis added. [88] *LPR* 3. 194.

[89] See Hegel's criticism of the dualistic separation of the inner and the outer (*EL* §140+Z), and the correlative problems in conceptions of divine attributes as expressive, not of the unknowable divine essence, but only of divine relations to the world (*LPR* 2. 673–5).

[90] Hegel connects these views with the tragic theology of divine jealousy (*EL* §140Z). See Sect. 8.

[91] *RR* 308.

> ancients did not know what they really possessed in these forms, namely, that they contained the absolute consciousness of truth." (*LPR* 3. 81)[92]

On the other hand, if the trinitarian persons are not absolute unities or being-for-self, but taken as mere transient moments or aspects of God, the result is not the classical trinity, but monarchial modalism—a position that is sometime ascribed to Hegel—erroneously—which will be discussed in Section 2C. Hegel makes two points. (1) As we have seen, the concept of person or the "I" is not simply abstract being-for-self, but rather a dialectical unity in and through difference. On the one hand, the I is being-for-self, and, on the other, the I is utterly related to others.[93] The I as the unity of these is no longer the abstract I that is being-for-self only. Consequently, the objection to the trinity that person means absolute being-for-self, which makes mediation and mingling impossible, is based on a one-sided abstract concept of the "I" that suppresses its unity in and through difference. (2) Hegel appeals to the ordinary consciousness of love and friendship to illustrate both the mutual mediation and even the "mingling" of persons: "Of this too we have a representation: in love and friendship it is the person that maintains itself and through its love achieves its subjectivity which is its personhood."[94] Clearly in this example the person is not simply abstract being-for-self, but also being-for-other. Moreover, the person not only maintains itself in relation to other, but also "through its love achieves its subjectivity." Since love for Hegel is inherently intersubjective, it is a speculative concept. Hegel would ask, what is marriage if not a "mingling" of persons, a fusion of horizons, and the formation of a new corporate person, an I that is a we?[95]

This I that is a We cannot be grasped by the abstract rationalism of the understanding that fixes everything in abstract identities that remain merely externally related in spite of their relations. Hegel points out that the sensible mode of consideration is accustomed to having before it distinct things that are external to one another, and that "for the non-speculative thinking of the understanding, difference remains as difference—for example, the antithesis of finite and infinite. Absoluteness is ascribed to both terms, yet each also has a relation to the other, and in this way they are in unity,"[96] but a unity that is contradictory and that disintegrates.

However, according to Hegel, "God sublates this form of abstract universality and immediacy. In this way difference is posited; but he is precisely the sublating of the difference. Thereby he is for first time true actuality . . . "[97] God's triune infinitude posits and sublates/preserves the difference:

> God intuits himself in what is distinguished, he is united with himself only in his other, and is only present to himself in his other; only there does God close with

[92] *RR* 309. [93] *EL* §143Z. Cf. Ch. 5, Sect. 3. [94] *LPR* 3. 194.
[95] See *PR* §§75, 158–64. [96] *LPR* 3. 279–80. [97] *LPR* 3. 280.

> himself and behold himself in the other. This is wholly repugnant to sense experience, since for it one thing is here and another there. Everything counts as independent; what counts for it is not to be the sort of thing that subsists because it possesses itself in another. For sense experience, two things cannot be in one and the same place; they exclude each other. But in the idea, distinctions are not posited as exclusive of each other; rather they are found only in this mutual inclusion of the one with the other. This is the *truly supersensible realm*, not that of the understanding which is supposed to be above and beyond [*Jenseits*] . . . [98]

For Hegel, trinity is the speculative idea, the true infinite. For the understanding, dialectic is merely negative; consequently, the speculative idea, which reconciles opposing qualities that are for the understanding true only in their isolation and separation, appears to be a mystery. When the understanding confronts contradiction, "it stands still at . . . the contradiction in the face of the experience that it is life itself which sublates the contradiction."[99] For the understanding, the sublation of contradiction appears inconceivable, a mystery. However, "what appears inconceivable is precisely the concept itself."[100]

B. The Speculative Concrete

For Hegel, the speculative dialectic is affirmatively rational because it apprehends the unity of determinations in and through their opposition. This unity is irreducible to either opposite; it is something new because it is a result of their mutual exchange and sharing of each other's content; the opposites have flowed and grown together. This unity, which emerges from the dissolution of their separateness and opposition, is the affirmative result of the *Aufhebung*; it is their affirmative concrescence. This concrescence is their concrete totality and actuality, in which each, while remaining distinctly itself, is also its other. This unity in and through difference is the speculative concrete.[101]

[98] *LPR* 3. 280–1. [99] *LPR* 3. 280. [100] *LPR* 3. 282.

[101] On the term "speculative concrete," see I. Iljin, *The Philosophy of Hegel as a Doctrine of the Concreteness of God and Humanity*, ed. and trans. Philip T. Grier (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2011). For a brief account, see Williams, *Tragedy, Recognition, and the Death of God*, 232–8. The speculative concrete names the affirmative aspect and result of dialectic, the unity in and through difference or unity in opposition, the affirmative result achieved through determinate negation (*EL* §82). As such it is present as the affirmative final moment of every category and on all levels of the *Logic*. Absolute idea or the triune God is no exception to, but rather the supreme exemplification of, singularity (*Einzelheit*), concreteness. Of course, questions immediately arise, how far is the speculative concrete congruent with ordinary experience? Hegel's reply is that the *Logic* is category philosophy with a categorical progression exhibiting immanent rational necessity. Given that necessity, it is not his concern to make the realization of the concept, the transitions from finite to infinite, or from the subjective concept to existence, plausible to either ordinary experience or representation (*EL* §193R). The necessity immanent in the categories themselves is what counts. Elsewhere Hegel observes: "The study of philosophy is

One of the most accessible examples of the speculative concrete is Hegel's famous account of the phenomenological genesis of spirit. Spirit is "the unity of the different independent self-consciousnesses which, in their opposition, enjoy perfect freedom and independence: the I that is a We and a We that is an I."[102] Spirit is the speculative concrete, a unity in and through difference, a We, the first-person plural, a determinate universal. In this determinate unity, the parties are, on the one hand, not the same; they are other than and opposed to each other; nevertheless, at the same time they are united through their mutual recognition, which mediates their difference and their freedom. True freedom is found, not in their difference and separation, but in their union with each other. In union each is reciprocally both itself and the other. They have mutually coalesced and the result is a concrescence. This union is what is concrete and mediated in Hegel's sense, and as such it includes both while preserving their differences, for the union, as determinate, presupposes their differences. However, while in his *Philosophy of Religion* Hegel uses the concept of recognition to portray the loving relation of father and son in the immanent trinity, he does not call God a "We."[103] Nevertheless he does affirm that God is spirit in his community, and that this is "God existing as community."[104] As an articulated whole or totality, God also is speculative concrete.

Perhaps the "speculative concrete" is the proper philosophical meaning for the well-known, often misused terms "mystery" and "mystical." Consider Hegel's analysis of these terms:

> the meaning of the speculative is to be understood as being the same as what in earlier times used to be called "mystical," especially with regard to the religious consciousness and its content. When we speak of the 'mystical' nowadays, it is taken as a rule to be synonymous with what is *mysterious* and *incomprehensible*; and, depending on the ways their culture and mentality vary in other respects, some people treat the mysterious and incomprehensible as what is *authentic* and *genuine*, while others regard it as belonging to the domain of superstition and deception. About this we must remark first that the "mystical" is certainly something mysterious, but only for the understanding, and then only because abstract identity is the principle of the understanding. But *when it is regarded as synonymous with the speculative, the mystical is the concrete unity of the determinations that count as true for the understanding only in their separation and opposition.* (§32). So if those who recognize the mystical as what is genuine say that it is something utterly mysterious and just leave it at that, they are only

hindered as much by the conceit that will not argue [immediate knowing] as it is by the argumentative approach [based on formal logic and quasi-mathematical reasoning]" (*PhS* §67). Hegel holds that the latter mode of reasoning "is not the form in which truth can appear." Rather: "*Truth is its own self-movement* whereas the method just described is the mode of cognition that remains external to its material" (*PhS* §48). It offers "a table of contents, but the content itself it does not offer at all" (*PhS* §53).

[102] *PhS* §177. [103] *PhS* §772. [104] *LPR* 3. 331. Cf. *E.* §554.

> declaring that for them, too, thinking has only the significance of an abstract positing of identity, and that in order to attain the truth we must renounce thinking. . . . As we have seen, however, the abstract thinking of the understanding is so far from being something firm and ultimate that it proves itself, on the contrary, to be in constant self-subversion and overturns itself into its opposite, whereas the rational as such is *rational precisely because it contains both of the opposites as ideal moments within itself*. Thus everything rational can equally be called "mystical"; but this only amounts to saying that it transcends the understanding. It does *not* at all imply that what is so spoken of must be considered inaccessible to thinking or incomprehensible.[105]

The opening sentence of the above passage appears to identify the speculative concrete with pre-critical medieval mysticism; this will appeal to those who wish to affirm the mystical as genuine and affirm the superiority of faith to reason. However, it is clear that Hegel's speculative concrete supersedes both the pre-critical sense of the mystical as genuine and supra-rational, and the critical rationalistic sense of the mystical as fraudulent and superstitious. The speculative concrete for Hegel is a unity in and through difference that is a mystery, but only for the understanding, not for dialectical reason. It is neither fraudulent superstition nor supra-rational supernaturalism, but rather the speculative, dialectical–rational totality itself. Hegel rejects all forms of the double truth. For Hegel, speculative dialectic is not transcendental illusion, but a genuine, affirmative mediation wherein opposition is overcome and suspended in a higher concrescence and union. Hegel identifies the mystical in the sense of the speculative concrete as "the *truly supersensible realm*, not that of the understanding which is supposed to be above and beyond [*Jenseits*] . . . "[106]

The chief forms of the speculative concrete include spirit as the I that is a We; love as the reconciliation of the estranged and separated; life; mutual recognition; freedom (as being at home with self in one's other); ethical life—including right, marriage, family, and state as ethical unities in difference; God as established by the ontological proof is the unity in difference of concept and being—that is, God as triune. All of these, Hegel claims, are mystical in the sense of the speculative concrete. These transcend the understanding, but are not at all inaccessible to thinking, much less incomprehensible.[107] The speculative concrete is a totality that holds united within itself the

[105] *EL* §82Z; emphasis added. [106] *LPR* 3. 280–1.

[107] Another straightforward illustration of the speculative concrete is found in *E.* §436, where the universal self-consciousness of ethical life is the affirmative consciousness of self in another self, wherein each is established in his absolute independence, while at the same time no longer distinguishing itself from the other. Hegel comments: "The nature of this relationship is thoroughly speculative, and when it is supposed that the speculative is remote and inconceivable, one has only to consider the contents of this relationship to convince oneself of the groundlessness of this opinion." This affirmative moment of the dialectic is the speculative concrete, i.e., it is mystical in Hegel's sense, but in neither of the traditional senses distinguished in *EL* §82Z. For the full passage, cf. Sect. 5, n. 156, p. 267.

determinations that the understanding takes as fixed and true only in state of separation from each other. In the speculative concrete "these determinations are not valid when isolated from one another but only when sublated" as ideal moments of the totality.[108] The speculative concrete has theological–religious significance. Hegel defends the trinity by means of the logic of the idea wherein the distinctions are not exclusive but rather mutually inclusive. This mutual inclusion of immanent distinctions of a totality that remain both irreducible and yet inseparable in their union is "the truly supersensible realm."[109]

C. Is Hegel a Modalist?

Given that Hegel presents the immanent trinitarian distinctions as the speculative concrete, does Hegel's account of trinitarian personhood consist in a single personhood with three moments or modes of being? Walter Jaeschke points out that this question and the debate between classical trinitarians and modalist monarchians is not as urgent for Hegel as it was for the church fathers and traditional theology, for two reasons. (1) For Hegel the distinction between trinitarians and modalists belongs to the sphere of representation, and does not rise to the level of the speculative concept. (2) As far as the latter is concerned, the idea of God established in the ontological proof as the unity in difference of concept and objectivity (the absolute idea and as the thinking that thinks itself in the other of itself), contrasts and stands over against both of the dogmatic concepts.[110]

Nevertheless, Jaeschke asks whether Hegel's speculative concept of tri-unity reduces to one of the two dogmatic alternatives, or is rather a third alternative to both. Despite appearing to set the issue aside by consigning the pre-critical theological alternatives to the sphere of representation, Jaeschke puzzlingly does not claim that Hegel's speculative theology is a third post-critical alternative, but rather maintains that it is closer to the view that maintains the unity of personhood in three moments—that is, modalism.[111] This interpretation

[108] *EL* §32Z. [109] *LPR* 3. 281. [110] *EL* §§213–15.

[111] *RR* 309. He cites the *Phenomenology* (*PhS* §771), which criticizes the view that takes the moments of the movement of spirit as isolated, immovable substances or subjects, instead of as transient moments whose distinctions are resolved as soon as they are made, and made as soon as they are resolved, and what is true and actual is precisely this immanent circular movement (*PhS* §770). However, these formulations are further qualified by another, which characterizes the immanent trinity as constituted by a difference, which, in pure thought, is no difference—to wit, "a loving recognition in which the two sides, as regards their essence, do not stand in an antithetical relation to each other" (*PhS* §772). The distinctions between the Trinitarian symbols "father" and "son" are here characterized as mutual self-recognition in other. Jaeschke criticizes this interpretation, which attributes mutual recognition to the representational and conceptual forms (*RR* 307), claiming that this recognition must come from the side of the

would appear to coincide with the reading of Hegel as updating Spinoza by replacing a monism of substance with a monism of subjectivity.

However, Jaeschke does not go in this direction but rather suggests an interpretation of Hegel's trinity based on Aristotle's *noesis noeseos*. Jaeschke claims that "Hegel's aim is to show that in the idea of trinity nothing else is comprehended than the unity of *nous* and *noeton*: in the . . . identity of concept and reality as the mode of thinking that thinks itself, the trinity is comprehended and vice versa."[112] In Jaeschke's view, the idea of the trinity, as absolute subjectivity, is a solution to the problem "of conceiving the relation to oneself as a relation to one's other—in other words, of conceiving how freedom is possible. For Hegel's concept of freedom is just this, being present-to-self in being-other [*Beisichsein im Anderssein*]."[113]

I agree with the latter point, but not because Hegel's concept of freedom is a binary—it is not; rather binary opposition is a lower, negative phase of the dialectic of the concept. For Hegel, binaries are fundamentally oppositions; but the unification of a binary requires the subjection of one side of the binary to the other. This type of unification excludes or suppresses difference. Given such subjugation of one by the other and the suppression of difference, the result is one-sided. No mediation or genuine reconciliation is possible.

For Hegel, genuine reconciliation requires not a binary scheme, which is only incomplete one-sided self-differentiation and mediation, but a triadic scheme—that is, syllogism, articulated totality. The overcoming and reconciliation of binary opposition requires the determinate totality of triunity because only the latter articulates unity in and through difference, for reasons that Hegel clearly states:

> The One is the indeterminate, that is, without characteristics, the impoverished initial abstraction, what is wholly empty. If it is to be internally concrete, to be living, then it must be determinate, and thus it is the Two, and the Third is the totality, the consummation of determinateness. Thus even in the first efforts of humanity to think in the form of triunity, we can observe this necessity. *Unless three determinations are recognized in God, "God" is an empty word.* Right at the beginning we find the very simplest and most abstract determinations of thought.[114]

conceptual form. In rebuttal, consider Hegel's treatment of essence in which pairs of related terms shine within each other, a shining that becomes far more explicit in the logic of the concept, where the three moments of the concept are both distinct and yet each is the whole concept (*EL* §160). Hegel's concept of mutual recognition as an I that is a We, and vice versa, is getting at something similar.

[112] *RR* 306. [113] *RR* 306.

[114] *LPR* 2. 558–9; emphasis added. Here Hegel is treating not Christianity, but Chinese religion. His point is primarily logical and concerns the dialectical development of unity. See nn. 115, 139–40.

First, consider abstract unity or the One. The One, pure unity, is, strictly speaking, indeterminate, a bare unity without any second characteristic. Consequently, as Plato long ago observed, we should not even say of abstract indeterminate unity that it *is*.[115] The Neoplatonists were attracted to such a hyperessential unity and inaugurated a negative theology that culminated in an ecstatic vision, the flight of the lone to the Alone—that is, supra-rational mysticism.[116] However, Hegel believes that the negative concept of the One does not escape all determination; rather its determination is to have no determination.[117] But this determination is wholly negative and abstract. How can it be true? Of what is it true? If it is true, then it must be determinate, as Hegel explains:

> The One is the indeterminate, that is, without characteristics, the impoverished initial abstraction, what is wholly empty. If it is to be internally concrete, to be living, then it must be determinate, and thus it is the Two.[118]

If the One is determinate, then it must have some characteristic besides unity. But then, strictly speaking, it is not a One, but a *determinate* unity—that is, a dyad that is internally concrete. However, such a dyad is, strictly speaking, a duality, something like Kant's antinomies, a "two" that is nevertheless one. But this is a contradiction. To resolve this contradiction, a further development is necessary. But then it is no longer a dyad, for, "if it is to have the principle of organic life and spirituality, an advance must be made to determination. Unity is *actual* only insofar as it contains two within itself, and this yields the triad."[119] However, the triad is not the number three, but rather a *totality united in and through difference*: "the Third is the totality, the consummation

[115] Plato, *Parmenides*, in *Plato and Parmenides*, trans. F. M. Cornford (New York: Library of Liberal Arts, Liberal Arts Press, 1957). Hypothesis I. Since the one is only one, it is not even clear that it supports the "is" of the copula, i.e., it cannot be coherently discoursed about (*Parmenides*, 141e). The possibility of discourse depends on Hypothesis II—namely, that the One *is*, i.e., has distinguishable elements, i.e., unity and being. But if it possesses only these two, the result is the indefinite dyad, a forerunner of the spurious infinite. The conditions of cognition and discourse presuppose that the One is a whole of parts, that is both the same and different from itself (in the other).

[116] See Plotinus, *Enneads*, trans. S. McKenna (London: Faber, 1954), Ennead 6.IX. Hegel agrees with Aristotelians like Thomas Aquinas that significant negation depends on some logically prior affirmative knowledge; otherwise there is nothing to guide the process of negative determination, or to justify claims why negations are truer than affirmations, or that some negations are "truer" than other negations. As we have seen, with his concept of speculative concrete as the truly supersensible realm, Hegel has his own way of dealing with the issues that Aquinas treated with his concept of analogy. However, Hegel differs importantly from Aquinas's claim that the trinity is a supra-rational revealed doctrine of faith. Hegel rejects the double truth position. For him the trinity is not only a doctrine of faith, but also "reason's concept of God" (*EL* §182Z).

[117] However, for Hegel as for Fichte, this absence or exclusion of determination correlates not with ecstasy but with religions of servile fear and superstition because no self-recognition in other is possible—religion as master/slave. *EL* §194Z.1.

[118] *LPR* 2. 558–9.

[119] *LPR* 2. 558–9.

of determinateness. Thus even in the first efforts of humanity to think in the form of triunity, we can observe this necessity. *Unless three determinations are recognized in God, 'God' is an empty word.*"[120] A dyad is, on the one hand, necessary for life; for life proceeds by way of opposition and development. However, once a dyad has been seen to be a necessary condition of life and cognition, then it cannot remain a dyad. For, if it did, the result would be dualism, negative dialectic, and the spurious infinity, the inert concepts of the understanding. A dyad is either no mediation (dualism) or an incomplete mediation—that is, the "ought" or spurious infinite. For Hegel, a third step to triadic totality is necessary. This constitutes the affirmative dialectic, which consummates determinateness in concrete universality. Thus he holds that, unless three determinations are recognized in God, "God" is an empty word.

To conclude this section, Hegel's account of trinity does not employ, much less privilege, persons as abstract irreducible units, which imply that the divine unity disintegrates into tritheism. On the other hand, neither does Hegel privilege abstract identity and unity as classical modalism does, rendering the trinitarian persons as masks or avatars of an abstract substantial unity, or an equally abstract substantial subjectivity.[121] Put simply, neither in his account of the concept and absolute idea, nor in his account of trinity, is Hegel an atomist or a monist. Rather he is a dialectical holist—that is, a philosophical and theological trinitarian. The moments of the concept—universality, particularity, singularity—cannot be simply identified or reduced to the same, but neither can they be separated.[122] As we have seen, the same is true of the fundamental categories of spirit and structures of determinate being and of consciousness: the I is both *for itself* and unconditionally *for other*.[123] As we saw in Chapter 5, an other is logically implicated by the I (cf. the dialectic of something and other), so that an actual I itself puts solipsism out of play. If there is one, there is immediately another. They are different, and yet the same in their difference.[124] They are related to each other

[120] *LPR* 2. 558–9; emphasis added. Here Hegel is reflecting on the triadic form in Chinese religion. His point, however, is primarily logical and concerned with the dialectical development of unity.

[121] See *EL* §182R for a formulation of syllogism that approximates monism. In syllogism the logical subject concludes with itself, and thus "the subject is all by itself the syllogism of reason." The apparent unqualified one-sided monistic meaning of this suppresses difference (and thus the primal division of the universal in judgment). The assertion that the subject concludes with itself also appears to suppress the difference, even though that claim is obviously a misinterpretation of Hegel's whole systematic account of syllogism as the completion of judgment. The monist reading of the subject is flatly contradicted by Hegel's account of the absolute idea as the absolute subject–object (*EL* §214) and by his important comments on double transition in *EL* §242: "It is only through this double movement that difference gets its due, since each of the two that are distinct consummates itself, considered in itself, into the *totality* and works out its unity with the other. Only this self-sublating of the one-sidedness of *both* sides in themselves *prevents* the unity from becoming one-sided."

[122] *EL* §164. [123] *EL* §143Z. See Ch. 5, Sect. 3. [124] See *EL* §§90–5, 143Z.

and in that sense overlap, but they remain irreducible. Their relation constitutes a whole that is a unity-in-and-through-difference. Hegel designates the highest level of this whole triune absolute spirit.

3. THEOLOGICAL HOLISM: GOD AS TRIUNE ABSOLUTE SPIRIT

Unlike classical Christian theology, for which the Holy Spirit is a not very well-defined trinitarian person, for Hegel Spirit designates the triune God as a whole. In spirit, "personhood [the intensification of *Fürsichsein*], just as much as it is posited, is posited as resolved"[125]—that is, as mediated and united with the other. God the father is universal, what is one. "The other the son, is infinite particularity . . . the third, Spirit, is singularity as such. But we must be aware that *all three are spirit*. In the third we say God is the spirit, but the spirit . . . is also the first. It is essential to hold on to this; it is explained by the nature of the concept."[126] Spirit as the "last" is also the result, the end that is the true beginning, the whole. Hegel's absolute Spirit, as universal singularity, is the community of the others.

To be sure, the theological doctrine of trinity is not simply reducible to the logical phases of the concept, because it includes historical and theological claims concerning the death of Jesus as both similar to and different from the death of an individual like Socrates.[127] Nevertheless, the logic provides the fundamental principles and patterns of thought by which Hegel seeks to expound the inner logic of the Christian faith "from the concept" as a religion of reconciliation and freedom. Hegel's reconstruction of the concept of God as triune borrows from the logic the concepts of dialectical syllogism and absolute idea, and recasts these theologically as follows:

> God is the trinity, i.e., he is the course of life that consists in being the universal that has being in and for itself [that is, ontological proof], or in differentiating itself and then in setting itself over against itself, yet in so doing, being identical with itself—in a word, it consists in being this syllogism.[128]

For Hegel, everything rational is a syllogism.[129] This includes the trinity, when its symbols and representations are properly translated into the language of the concept. The syllogism is the concept fully developed and explicit.[130]

[125] *LPR* 3. 194. [126] *LPR* 3. 194–5.
[127] For Hegel, the death of Jesus has for Christians religious–theological significance—namely, the death of God. *LPR* 3. 321 n.–323 n.
[128] *LPR* 3. 369. [129] *SL* 664; *EL* §181. [130] *SL* 664.

If deism is the understanding's abstract concept of God as abstract transcendence, trinity is the concretely mediated, rational concept of God.[131]

To be sure, Hegel sharply distinguishes the dialectical syllogism of reason (presented above) from the standard formal syllogism of the understanding, which "is so devoid of reason that it has nothing to do with the rationality of its basic import."[132] What interests Hegel about the dialectical syllogism of reason is its affirmative, concretely mediated character. Dialectical syllogism is affirmative because it is "the fulfillment of the empty 'is' of the copula, and since (as subject and predicate) its moments are at the same time distinct, the concept is posited as their unity, as the *relation* mediating between them."[133] For Hegel, the dialectical syllogism is the basic movement of reason that overcomes the abstract formalism of the syllogism of the understanding; everything rational is a syllogism—"a universal that through particularity is united with singularity [*Einzelheit*], but it is certainly not a whole consisting of three propositions."[134]

Hegel's distinction of the dialectical syllogism of reason from the traditional syllogism is related to and an important part of his systematic distinction between reason and the understanding. Fortunately, Hegel summarizes the distinction insofar as it bears upon logic, the speculative concrete, and theology, in the following passage:

> the fact is that no content can be rational except through the rational form. In this matter we cannot look for any help in the common chatter about reason; for this refrains from stating what is to be understood by *reason*; this supposedly rational cognition is for the most part so busy with its objects that it forgets to cognize reason itself and only distinguishes and characterizes it by the objects that it possesses. If reason is supposed to be the cognition that knows about God, freedom, right and duty, the infinite, unconditioned, supersensuous . . . the first question still remains, what is it in all these objects that makes them rational? It is this: that the infinitude of these objects is not the empty abstraction from the finite, not the [abstract] universality that lacks content and determinateness, but the universality that is fulfilled or realized, the concept that is *determinate* and possesses its determinateness in this true way, namely, that it differentiates itself within itself and is the unity of these fixed and determinate differences. It is only thus that reason *rises* above the finite, conditioned, sensuous—call it what you will—and in this negativity is essentially *pregnant with content*, for it is the unity of determinate extremes; as such, however, the *rational* is nothing but the *syllogism*. . . . The essential feature of the syllogism is the *unity* of the extremes, the *middle* term which unites them and the *ground* which supports them.[135]

What makes the rational syllogism rational and capable of rising above the finite to constitute the true supersensible realm is the concrete or determinate

[131] *EL* §182Z. [132] *EL* §81R. [133] *EL* §180. [134] *SL* 669.
[135] *SL* 664–5; emphasis in original.

universal. This universal possesses its determinacy in the true way; it differentiates itself within itself and is the organically connected unity of the determinate differences of the extremes. The concrete universal is an articulated whole pregnant with content, present in and relating its members. Conversely the members are not indifferent to or unaffected by this unity, but only are what they truly are within it. A hand that is severed from its body may still look like a hand and exist, but it ceases to be actual.[136]

In contrast, the standard or traditional syllogism, in Hegel's view, severs the relations and connections between its members. It holds "rigidly to the self-subsistence of the extremes, [and] opposes the unity to them as a determinateness which is likewise fixed and self-subsistent, and in this way apprehends it rather as non-unity than as unity."[137] It grasps the unity as an abstract universal that is external to the particulars comprising the extremes, and thus treats the abstract universal as itself a particular. Thus it "stops short at the mutual externality of the terms" and fails to mediate and unify them.[138] It falls into the spurious infinite or the ought. Hegel comments:

> Now if the syllogism consists in the *unity of the extremes* being *posited* in it, and if, all the same, this unity is simply taken on the one hand as a particular on its own, and on the other hand as a merely external relation, and *non-unity* is made the essential relationship of the syllogism, then the reason which constitutes the syllogism contributes nothing to its rationality.[139]

Hegel conceives the trinity as a "logical organism," of mutually interconnected members. Hegel conceives trinity as developing from an initial stage of abstract immediate universality (corresponding to God as father), to a stage of self-differentiation and sundering (God as son who makes manifest the father), to a concretely mediated and fully self-actualized totality (God as spirit). Hegel tells us:

> As spirit, God is the activity of free knowing present to itself; as an activity this must posit itself in different moments, and as concept it must divide itself in judgment—but in such a way that what is differentiated is, without mediation, that from which it was differentiated. In the dogmatic image, this is expressed by saying that God as Father eternally begets his son. We say "God does this in order to beget a son for himself." But all of this "doing" is God himself; he is only the totality, and taken abstractly as the Father, he is not the true God."[140]

God as father is ambiguous. On the one hand, the symbol of the father may be considered as abstract from and prior to and outside of trinitarian "development"—for example, as in ancient Greek monotheism and other religious traditions. In general, concepts of God reflect understandings of nature.[141]

[136] *PR* §270Z. [137] *SL* 665. [138] *SL* 665. [139] *SL* 665. [140] *LPR* 3. 364.
[141] *LPR* 1. 231: "God's internal self-development has . . . the same necessity as the development of the universe . . . "

Hegel observes that those who regard nature as merely inward or inaccessible and unknowable adopt the standpoint of tragic theology, which considered the divine to be jealous, and the power of fate as blind necessity to be superior to the gods. Such views depend on ancient cosmologies and interpretations of matter as formless chaos that is the foundation of the world, and that requires the forcible imposition of form and order—for example, the Babylonian creation myth.[142] For Hegel, the deeper view is monotheism, and the doctrine that God created the world—both matter and form—*ex nihilo*. Neither matter nor form is independent of God; but, since form is totality, the free and infinite concept, it bears the principle of matter in itself.[143]

However, the divine One of monotheism is also ambiguous, as we have previously noted, in that it may be a primarily negative One that is an abyss of all determinations. If it is living, then it must be internally differentiated, and to be self-differentiating it must negate itself—that is, possess a dyadic structure. As we have seen, Hegel holds that, if the dyadic structure itself is not to fall into dualism and the spurious infinite, a chaos, or a Neoplatonic theory of emanations, logical and conceptual necessity drives the dyad towards a triadic, holistic conception such as the triad or trinity. This alone resolves the contradiction of dualism: "The resolution consists in the fact that Spirit is the totality, and the first moment itself [the father] is grasped as first only because to begin with, it possesses the determination of the third, of activity."[144] The third, which constitutes the whole, is spirit, the consciousness of the whole as returned into itself. Spirit is the self-identical union of God in God's inherent differentiation—that is, [spirit] is eternal love. "Spirit, love is the intuition of oneself in another."[145]

As love, spirit clarifies the ambiguities surrounding God the father: "The relationship between these spheres is as follows: in all three the idea is divine self-revelation."[146] The content and form in all three is spirit itself: "Spirit, love is the intuition of oneself in another. . . . God is spirit . . . the One in the infinite subjectivity of the difference."[147] Spirit as the infinite subjectivity of the difference is neither sheer unity, nor a lifeless solitary, nor a monosubjectival absolute, nor a spurious infinity of dualism, but rather a social infinite, the true infinite that includes the finite. But what is the concept of personhood that is required by and exhibited in Absolute spirit, the infinite subjectivity of difference? It is a concept of personhood in community—that is, absolute spirit,

[142] *EL* §128Z. For the Babylonian Creation myth, see Paul Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, trans. E. Buchanan (Boston: Beacon, 1967).

[143] *EL* §§160–3.

[144] *LPR* 3. 86. Hegel sketches this development of the classical concept of God in *LPR* 3. 78–86.

[145] *LPR* 3. 78.

[146] *LPR* 3. 362.

[147] *LPR* 3. 78. I have modified the translation, reading *des Unterschieds* as "of the difference" rather than "of distinction."

which must be able to articulate the unity of the trinitarian persons while preserving their distinctions.

The traditional trinitarian formulations are one-sided. They privilege either the unity of the divine in different modes at the expense of difference, or the abstract sense of person as an impenetrable unit, and end in tritheism at the expense of unity and subjectivity, and thus are incapable of fulfilling both requirements. According to Hegel: "It is the empty understanding that roams around in these empty forms, while the business of philosophy with regard to them consists in exhibiting their nullity and lack of content."[148] Such concepts are as easy to understand, as they are devoid of truth. Does Hegel have a conception that does a better job? Perhaps, but he warns us that, while the speculative conception that grasps unity in the difference does the job, it may appear to be "incomprehensible."[149] However, what is thus dismissed as "inconceivable" and "incomprehensible" is the speculative concrete, the rational concept itself.[150]

4. THE DIALECTICAL PERSONHOOD OF SPIRIT

We have found that, while the terms "subject" and "personhood" are concrete, what is absolutely concrete and inclusive is spirit, because spirit is personhood developed into its totality—that is, community.[151] We have also seen that Hegel criticizes Enlightenment rationalism that rejects contradiction as irrational, and takes the absence of contradiction as the fundamental criterion of logical and ontological possibility. By this criterion, anything can be considered impossible. For example,

> nothing is more impossible than the fact that I exist, for the 'I' is at once simple self-relation as well as unconditionally relation to another. The same 'impossible' situation holds for every content in the natural and spiritual world, for law, freedom, and above all for God himself as the true, triune God.[152]

Hegel holds that everything living contains contradiction in it, and whoever maintains that things in themselves must not contradict themselves is demanding that nothing living shall exist.[153] Consequently, for Hegel the concept of the I, the concept of logical singularity (*Einzelheit*), and the correlative concepts of person and personhood contain contradiction, and thus possess dual significance and meaning—for example, they include the logical contrast between abstract universality and abstract particularity (*Besonderheit*). Taken separately, these are easy to grasp, but the real task is to bring them into

[148] *EL* §143Z. [149] *PR* §7R. [150] *EL* §231R; cf. *LPR* 3. 280–3.
[151] *SL* §§164R, 159R. [152] *EL* §143Z. [153] *Aesthetics*, 1. 120.

relation—that is, concrete, determinate unity in and through difference. If we take the law of non-contradiction as absolute, the understanding declares such concepts inconceivable, incomprehensible, and consequently reduces them to a one-sided abstract identity or equally one-sided abstract difference. It maintains these one-sided opposites are true only in abstract separation and isolation or in a forced unity that subjects one to the other.

However, this one-sidedness blinds the understanding and keeps it from appreciating the speculative concrete, the vital unity of opposites that living things contain, endure, and resolve, and are found in higher richer spiritual (*geistig*) formations. In contrast to the understanding, speculative philosophy grasps things as living totalities that contain opposing terms sublated in concrescence or determinate unities:

> being a totality, speculative concepts contain the determinations united within themselves that dogmatism holds to be fixed and true in a state of separation. . . . In other words [for speculative philosophy] these determinations are not valid when they are isolated from one another but only when they are sublated . . .

that is, have "entered into union with their opposite."[154]

> The living thing is an example of what cannot be grasped by the understanding. "God is love" is an expression very much to the point . . . as love, God is person, and the relationship is such that the consciousness of the One is to be had only in the consciousness of the other. God is conscious of himself, as Goethe says, only in the other, in absolute externalization. . . . In the relationship of friendship, of love, of the family, *this identity of one with the other* is also to be found. It is contrary to the understanding, that I who exist for myself and am therefore self-consciousness, should have my consciousness rather in another. But the reconciliation [of this contradiction] is the abstract content of the substantial, universal ethical relationship in general.[155]

For Hegel, the phenomenological genesis of the concept of spirit is the union resulting from mutual–reciprocal recognition wherein the I becomes a We. On a higher level, spirit is manifest in ethical life—institutions such as love, marriage, family, and the state in the ethical sense; God is no exception to, but the chief exemplification of, spirit, and that is why Hegel's preferred term for God is absolute spirit.

In the following formulation Hegel brings out contradictions in the senses of singularity, persons, and freedom. On the one hand, persons, as *immediate singularities*, are impenetrable, independent selves exclusive of others (*fürsichsein*, *being-for-self*). On the other hand, persons are nevertheless not impermeable, but related to and united with others (*being-for-others*), which is found in determinate

[154] *EL* §32Z. For the definition of the *Aufhebung* (sublation) as union with opposite or concrescence, see *SL* 107.

[155] *LPR* 3. 193.

intersubjectivities and unities—for example, love, marriage, family, ethical life, including state and religion. The resolution of such contradictions constitutes the structure of concrete, actual, ethical life, the actuality of the rational. In an important passage on the general structure of ethical life, Hegel writes:

> In the condition of universal freedom, when I reflect on myself, I am immediately reflected into the others and conversely, when I am related to the others, I am related to myself. Here we have the powerful *diremption of spirit* into *different selves*, which are, in and for themselves and for each other, fully free, *independent, absolutely impenetrable* and offering resistance to each other, and yet *at the same time, identical with one another, hence not independent, not impermeable, but have as it were, coalesced with each other, formed a vital concrescence*. This relationship is thoroughly speculative; and when it is supposed that the speculative is something remote and inconceivable, one has only to consider the content of this relationship to become convinced that this opinion is groundless.[156]

How is the speculative unity-in-and-through-difference constitutive of ethical life possible? Clearly there must be a development from personhood in the narrow, merely particular sense of immediate singularity as being-for-one-*only*, to what Hegel calls "universal singularity."[157] This development is not discussed in the *Logic*; it is presupposed by the *Philosophy of Right*; it is taken up principally in the *Philosophy of Spirit* and *Philosophy of Religion*. Hegel characterizes immediate singularity as self-seeking desire that seeks *only* its own satisfaction. On the other hand, *universal singularity* is reciprocally mediated exchange with an other; it is a mentality that reaches out to others in empathy, an enlarged mentality that renounces coercion in favor of persuasion. Its deepest level is love, which overcomes enmity. Universal singularity is spirit, an I that is a We, an individual that, as a member of a community, is also universal.

As we noted earlier, Hegel designates the principle of personhood as universality, and explains what this means by pointing to a stark example of the denial of universal personhood—namely, the practice of slavery:

> What the slave lacks is the recognition of his personhood. But the principle of personhood is universality. The master considers the slave not as a person, but as thing devoid of self, and the slave does not count for himself as an "I", for his master is his "I" instead.[158]

In his 1825 *Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit*, Hegel lays out the logical and social–psychological conditions of mastery and slavery, contrasting them with the recognitive universal ethical life as follows:

> All of this [that is, life-and-death struggle and mastery/slavery] still lacks the determination of *universality*, since it still has the form of immediate singularity

[156] *E.* §436Z; my translation; emphasis added.
[157] *LPR* 3. 133, 143; cf. *EL* §163.
[158] *EL* §163Z.

> [*unmittelbaren Einzelnheit*]. Under these social–psychological conditions, it is still the case that when I recognize another as free, I am unfree through that very act of recognition. . . . At this present standpoint, we have to completely forget about the relationships we are presently accustomed to thinking about. If we speak of right, ethical life, love, we know that when we recognize others, I recognize their complete personal independence. We know too that I do not suffer on account of this recognition, but rather have validity as a free being, that when others have rights, I too have rights, or that *my right is essentially the right of the other* . . . Here however there is as yet no such relationship . . . Insofar as the immediate singularity [*unmittelbaren Einzelnheit*] of my self-consciousness and my freedom are not yet distinguished or separated, I am unable to surrender anything of my particularity [*Besonderheit*] without surrendering my freedom and independence.[159]

Under the conditions of immediate singularity (*unmittelbare Einzelheit*) the "I" is a bare impenetrable atom and the other remains wholly external and unknown. There is no mediation, no emergent or immanent universality—that is, no self-recognition in other is possible—no "we" is possible. Given that the self is an immediate singularity, it can only be opposed to and exclusive of the other. Moreover, the structures of consciousness and relations—being-for-self and being-for-other—likewise appear mutually exclusive and contradictory. This corresponds to the state of nature (*Naturzustand*).

On the other hand, the conditions of ethical life include the recognition of subjective freedom and the renunciation of coercion.[160] Unlike life under conditions of slavery, each counts as an "I," both for herself and for the other. The other's recognition of me mediates my freedom to me, wherein I obtain the truth and confirmation of my freedom. The other is the soil, the space in which I realize my freedom, and conversely I must reciprocally recognize him or her. In this case, being-for-self and being-for-other are not merely compatible and harmonious, but constitute a self-augmenting circulation or "fusion of horizons" that produces determinate free unities and communities. Affirmative mutual recognition results in spirit, the I that is a We—an enlarged mentality that corresponds logically to universal singularity. Reciprocal recognition grounds the concept of right, such that "my right" is not an abstract "mine," but is included in the right of the other.

Hegel defines this condition as universal singularity (*allgemeine Einzelheit*)—namely, it is both determinate and yet universal.[161] Universal singularity implies a true, social infinity; it is both the determinacy that is universal, and

[159] *BPhG* 75–7.

[160] Hegel holds a retributivist view of punishment whose principal value is freedom. For this reason, coercion is never justified, except when it is directed against coercion.

[161] *EL* §163.

the universal that is determinate, concrete, and actual. In the concept of this whole, the identity of its moments is posited, and "each of its moments can only be grasped . . . on the basis of and together with the others."[162] Similarly, by virtue of the recognitive mediation and achievement of the enlarged mentality of spirit, the opposition between being-for-self and being-for-other is resolved into a higher, richer unity-in-and-through-difference—for example, love, friendship, ethical life.

Universal singularity is the concept of subjectivity, personhood, and freedom that Hegel affirms of God as triune because it includes the requisite conditions of concrete universality, non-coercive, affirmative mediation, and self-recognition in other. We have seen that the moments of the concept in their speculative concreteness are both identical and inseparable, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, are different; thus the concept is a totality. Similarly, for Hegel, the trinitarian persons are in their concreteness both inseparable and yet different. For Hegel, the antithesis of the trinitarian persons is both posited and resolved; the resolution constitutes a higher union—that is, triune absolute spirit. "It is precisely in the divine unity that personhood, to the extent that it is posited (i.e., in opposition or antithesis to other), is posited as *resolved*."[163] This is "a resolution in the sense not that the contradiction is not present but rather that it is to be overcome."[164] The resolution of the contradictions and contrasts of the trinitarian persons in Hegel's account means that personhood is not abstract—that is, "not maintained in isolation"[165]—but rather actual in and as community. Subjectivity is both for itself and utterly for the other; it is recognitive intersubjective personhood. Hegel summarizes and formulates the dialectical concept of personhood:

> Personhood is the first, innermost, but also the most abstract mode in which freedom announces its presence in the human being. I am a person, I stand on my own—[this is] an unyielding position. So when these [trinitarian] distinctions are defined in such a way that each . . . is taken as one or indeed as [abstract] person . . . then what the idea demands appears even more unattainable. . . . Two cannot be one; each is a rigid, unyielding, independent being-for-self. But Logic shows that the category of "the one" is a poor category, the wholly abstract unit . . . .
>
> But as far as personhood is concerned, it is the character of the person, the subject, to surrender its isolation and separateness. Ethical life, love, means giving up abstract particularity [*Besonderheit*], merely individual personhood [*besondere Persönlichkeit*] *opposed* to others and community, or rather enlarging and expanding it to universality—so too with friendship. In friendship and love I give up my abstract personhood and thereby win it back as concrete. The truth of personhood is found precisely in winning it back through this immersion, this being engrossed in the other.[166]

[162] *EL* §164. [163] *LPR* 3. 194. [164] *LPR* 3. 83.
[165] *LPR* 3. 82. [166] *LPR* 3. 285–6.

It is not only that my right is included in the right of the other, but also that true freedom "*consists in my identity with the other*. I am only truly free when the other is also free and is recognized by me as free."[167]

Hegel thinks that only the dialectical concept of person constituted by the recognitive reciprocal mediation of being-for-self and being-for-other is capable of articulating both the unity of the trinitarian persons and preserving their differences in a unity that is not an abstract essence, but a unity in and through difference or a community. The traditional metaphysical formulations are not capable of fulfilling both requirements of determinate unity in and through difference—to wit, the identity and the difference of the persons. Either they focus on abstract unity of the divine being as essential, which implies modalism that suppresses the difference, or they focus on the persons taken as abstract units (being-for-self) as essential, resulting in the disintegration of the divine into tritheism. In Hegel's view, the concept of personhood as universal singularity is a unity in and through difference that mediates being-for-self and being-for-other. The unity of the persons is not an abstract essence, but just their unity in and through difference or community.[168] And, because their unity is their community, their differences—that is, their individual subjectivity and personhood—are essential to their unity.

5. THE SINGULARITY OF THE CONCEPT IN ITS THEOLOGICAL DIFFERENTIATION

Hegel's criticism of Kant's formalism—that is, abstract universality—is well known. Hegel's doctrine of the concept is intended as an anti-formalist corrective.[169] Thus it appears ironic to find Walter Jaeschke commenting critically about formalism in interpretations of the philosophy of religion based on the *Logic*:

> It is no recommendation for the constructive value of the terms "universality," "particularity," and "individuality" [*Einzelheit*] that they remain unaffected by the change in contents. Rather it arouses misgivings about the explanatory power of an interpretation [of the *Philosophy of Religion*] based on logical structure . . . it is appropriate to be skeptical about . . . interpretations that seek to grasp the fine structure of the argumentation in greater or lesser detail by tying it to the logic.[170]

I can only second Jaeschke's concerns by noting that Hegel himself struggles with the issue of logical formalism when he is compelled to explain and differentiate the term *Einzelheit* (translated here as singularity) with qualifying

[167] *E.* §431Z; emphasis added. [168] *EL* §140; *LPR* 2. 674.
[169] Cf. *SL* 600–22. [170] *RR* 297.

terms such as "immediate," "universal," not only in the *Logic* (*EL* §163R) but also in the *Philosophy of Right* (*PR* §7R). These qualifying terms are not strictly part of the logical exposition of the concept itself, but are required by considerations introduced by the philosophies of spirit and religion.[171]

We have seen that the term singularity (*Einzelheit*) already does triple duty in Hegel's concept of the concept: (1) it is the third concrete mediating term to abstract universality and abstract particularity—that is, concrete universality or ground; (2) it is the moment in which the concept is posited for itself as a whole—that is, subject; (3) it is the logical "place" of subjectivity and personhood. Now we are about to examine some yet more determinate—that is, concrete meanings of the term in the *Philosophy of Religion*, which will elaborate *Einzelheit* further as "immediate singularity," "universal singularity," "divine singularity," "absolute singularity," and "exclusive singularity."[172] This differentiation is important, and little noticed, because Hegel's discussion of singularity occurs principally, but not exclusively, in Hegel's 1821 Lecture manuscript.[173] We are almost overwhelmed by the polyvalence of Hegel's differentiation of singularity (*Einzelheit*). If this seems confusing, I can only plead that taking note of and following up Hegel's important qualifications of the logical category of *Einzelheit* as it is rendered more determinate in the framework of spirit is important and necessary, not only to avoid logical formalism, but to understand Hegel's account of personhood and spirit.[174]

[171] Are Hegel's qualifications of logical *Einzelheit* as immediate or universal, plausible? For is not *Einzelheit* already mediated and constituted as concrete universality? How then can it be immediate in the sense of being-for-one-only? Is not universal *Einzelheit* a contradiction? A universal singular? These puzzles result from Hegel's qualifications of the logical category of *Einzelheit* qua concrete universality of the concept, by the realphilosophical categories of nature and spirit, including being-for-self versus being-for-other, which are the determinate shapes of the dialectic of the "something" and "other," or the "one" and the "other." The difference of levels creates a potential for confusion between spirit and nature. For example, immediate *Einzelheit* is a self-mediated immediacy of the self as an immediate totality. As such it denotes the self as immersed in *nature* (*EL* §161Z), which, practically speaking, means its pre-recognitive *Selbstsein*—that is, self-seeking, being-for-one-only. This is a description of immediacy from a higher, mediated perspective, e.g., ethical life. Similarly, universal *Einzelheit* opens up a higher level of possibilities, i.e., being-for-other, and mediation by other i.e., mutual recognition, being a member of a community of ethical life, e.g., love, marriage, family, civil society, state, church, etc. This is the point at which Hegel's logical concept of universal singularity intersects with his better-known concept of mutual recognition.

[172] The last-mentioned term is ambiguous. It might seem to be equivalent to immediate singularity, i.e., abstract being-for-self. But Hegel defines it as having the opposite meaning—namely, to be "exclusively for others." It articulates Hegel's kenotic Christology. On this topic, see Claude Welch (ed. and trans.), *God and Incarnation in Mid-Nineteenth-Century German Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965).

[173] *LPR* 3. 133–42. Peter Hodgson points out that this passage is the most completely developed statement of Hegel's concept of Spirit as community in any of the lectures (*Hegel and Christian Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 181–2); see also 1824 Lectures, *LPR* 3. 186.

[174] See Hodgson, *Hegel and Christian Theology*, 146–53. His discussion is oriented toward the distinction between nature and spirit and the possibility of evil. Hodgson demonstrates the

Hegel's comments on the distinction between immediate and universal singularity are found principally in his 1821 Lecture manuscript. Here these terms are further elaborated in their theological context and senses. The principle of personhood as universal singularity is expressed in Hegel's account of the cultus. The cultus is one of the three spheres Hegel distinguishes in the divine idea (absolute idea): (1) the idea in and for itself, or the concept of God as triune, (2) the diremption of the idea into God and World or Nature, (3) the history of redemption and reconciliation—the eternal divine history is the objective aspect and foundation of reconciliation. The subjective aspect of this history of reconciliation is the cultus. According to Hegel, these are the three spheres in which the divine idea is to be considered; it is wholly present in each of them, although differentiated according to the specific content.[175]

The third sphere is the idea in its character as singularity (*Einzelheit*), but in the first instance it is portrayed as only one singular individual—the *divine singularity*, which is also designated as *universal singularity*. Here divine singularity is synonymous with incarnation, the principle of divine–human unity.[176] Hegel places the incarnation as divine singularity within a history of world religions that has narrowed to and been consummated as a history of reconciliation. In the 1824 Lectures he explains that, within this history, reconciliation is necessary—that is, needed—because "the first being of a human being, its self-being [*Selbstsein*], is the concept in itself, implicit spirit; and what has to be sublated is the form of its immediacy, of *its singularized, private, being-for-itself* [*Fürsichsein*]."[177] This singularized private being-for-self expresses Hegel's analysis of autonomy as evil. Personhood, constituted as immediate singularity, either withdraws from or turns against community with others and becomes evil. It resists mediation and resolution.

Hegel's account of the primordial evil of autonomy reflects Jacob Boehme's myth of the Fall of Lucifer.[178] According to Hegel, Lucifer's Fall is equivalent to the assertion of pure unqualified autonomy in a way that places him in

relevance of the logical concept of singularity to these theological topics. See also Hegel's own comments on his non-standard, technical use of the term "concept" (*Begriff*) in his disagreement with Kant (*EL* §160Z). *Begreifen* means to grasp and hold fast to the unity in opposition constitutive of wholes. Hegel's use of this term fits perfectly with his distinction between speculative reason that grasps living wholes and totalities (cf. *EL* §32) and the abstract understanding that, with its abstract universal and identity, is more oriented toward mechanistic explanation and metaphysical atomism.

[175] Hegel here treats the triune God by analogy with the three moments of the concept—Universality, Particularity, and Singularity/Individuality (*Einzelheit*)—but adapts the logical scheme to speculative theology. *LPR* 3. 77; cf. *EL* §§160–4. Specifically, the concept is a whole present in its moments of universality, particularity, and singularity, which are posited as identical in and inseparable from the whole, and can be grasped only together with each other.

[176] *LPR* 3. 133. [177] *LPR* 3. 235.

[178] See Robert F. Brown, *The Later Philosophy of Schelling* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1977), 29–83.

opposition to others and to the universal: evil is being-for-self (*Fürsichsein*), but in such a way that it is being-for-*self only*. But, if real persons are constituted as both being-for-self and being-for-other, then being-for-one-only is equivalent to withdrawal from other and from community. The Fall of Lucifer "is the imaging of oneself within oneself, the self-imagining itself into itself, or withdrawing into itself, the being-for-self, the fire in which everything is consumed. This is the negative aspect of the separator, the torment, or the wrath of God."[179] Evil is "being-for-one *only*... This is the origin of evil in God and out of God..."[180] In choosing pure autonomy, the negative freedom of withdrawal, Lucifer chooses to act as if no God and no others existed. In choosing only himself, Lucifer chooses separation and the nullity of the negation fixed in itself.[181] In Boehme's myth Lucifer's Fall is prehistorical or transcendental.

Further, Hegel interprets the "immediate knowing" of Jacobi's *Gefühlsphilosophie* also as a "being-for-one-only." Hegel writes: "People who betake themselves to feeling, immediate knowledge, to their own representations or thoughts, lock themselves up into their own particularity and break off any community with others."[182] For Hegel, the "life of feeling" is in fact a retreat or withdrawal into inwardness. In the life of feeing, the I is carried beyond itself only in its yearning. But such yearning is constituted by self-exclusion from that for which one yearns; the self has only itself and its own satisfaction in view as its end. Despite its withdrawal, it is perversely satisfied with itself in its yearning as the highest condition possible.[183] Hegel describes this condition as the unhappy consciousness:

> I have this subjective "myself" in view as my end and am concerned only with myself as myself. It is just this fixed reflection that prevents me from being filled by the substantial content, the matter that religion is about, for it is in this matter

[179] Hegel, *Geschichte der Philosophie*, in *Werke*, 20. 109; emphasis added.

[180] Hegel, *Geschichte der Philosophie*, in *Werke*, 20. 100–1; see also *LHP* 3. 202–10; *LHP 1825–6* 3. 126–31. In Boehme's myth, Lucifer is eternally defined and determined by his withdrawal, unable to repent or change. See Brown, *The Later Philosophy of Schelling*.

[181] In the *Logic*, Hegel describes this posture as radical evil and "the most stubborn error: Self-subsistent independence, pushed to the peak of a unity *existing solely for itself*, is the *abstract, formal self-subsistence which destroys itself*. It is the greatest and most stubborn error, which nevertheless fancies itself to be the highest truth. It manifests itself in concrete forms as abstract freedom, as pure ego, and furthermore appears as evil. It is the freedom that so misunderstands itself that it places its very essence in this abstraction, and then flatters itself that in making itself at home within this abstraction, it has thereby won itself in its utmost purity. More precisely this self-sufficient independence is the error of regarding itself as negative and of relating itself negatively to its own essence. It is a negative relation to itself which, when it wants to win its own being, destroys it. Its action is only the manifestation of the futility and nullity of this very action. Reconciliation is the recognition that that which it negates is in fact its very own being. Reconciliation means letting go of the negativity of its exclusive being-for-itself, instead of holding fast to it" (*SL* 172).

[182] *LProofs*, 59. [183] *LProofs*, 60.

> that I forget myself; in becoming absorbed by it, reflection upon myself disappears. . . . This thing religion is about constitutes my end; in keeping myself outside, my interest turns away from attentiveness to it and back to myself. Thus I unceasingly empty myself and continue in a condition of emptiness. This hollowness that attaches to the highest end of the individual, to pious striving and concern about the well-being of the soul, has led to the most horrible manifestations of a powerless reality ranging from the quiet sorrow of a loving heart to the suffering of despair and madness . . . [184]

Hegel observes that "such unreality of the heart is not only emptiness, but also narrowness of heart; what fills it is its own formal subjectivity; it has this 'I' as its object and end."[185]

In contrast to the narrowness of heart, to the unhappy consciousness in the life of feeling and to Boehme's portrayal of Lucifer, all of which count as being-for-one-*only*, Hegel identifies another sense of singularity that he defines as *divine singularity*, *universal* singularity, being-for-others. This universal singularity is an elevation of the spirit, an opening of the heart and enlarging of the mentality within itself. Hegel believes that such widening and enlarging of the mentality is achieved through love, ultimately through the love of God. He describes love's process of overcoming the narrow self-seeking of immediate singularity. Love dissolves hardness of heart, and expands the mentality by opening it to incorporating other perspectives:

> Only the universal that subsists in and for itself is expansive, and the heart widens itself within itself only insofar as it enters into the universal and expands into this content, which is a *religious*, as well as *ethical* and *legal* content. Love is as such the heart's abandonment of its limitation to its own particular point [of view]; and its reception of the love of God is the reception of the unfolding of God's Spirit, which comprehends all true content within itself and absorbs into its objectivity what is peculiar to the heart. *Subjectivity*, which *is for the heart itself a one-sided form*, is surrendered in this content, a surrender wherein it is driven to throw off its subjectivity. This is the drive to act . . . or more strictly speaking, it is the drive to take part in the action of the content that belongs to the divine power and authority that subsists in and for itself and is therefore absolute. It is this that constitutes the reality of the heart, a reality that is indivisibly both inner and outer.[186]

The reality of what Hegel's calls the heart here is indivisibly both inner and outer. The heart is the unity of inner and outer—that is, it is not the narrow, self-preoccupied immediate singular—the unhappy consciousness that yearns to yearn, but a singularity that is universal, and, as universal, a singularity that is for others, and only as for others is it for itself. This conversion from self-preoccupation to concern for others takes the shape of *universal singularity*

[184] *LProofs*, 60. [185] *LProofs*, 61. [186] *LProofs*, 61.

(*Einzelheit*), and constitutes a community of being-for-self-and being-for-other. Hegel describes it thus:

> *Singularity is exclusively for others*; it is immediacy and is the return from the other into itself. The singularity of the divine idea, *the divine idea as one human being*, is first brought to completion in actuality to the extent that it has many single individuals confronting it, *whom it brings back into the unity of the spirit, into the community,* and therein it is present as *actual*, universal self-consciousness.[187]

This passage expresses the for-otherness of love as a reconciliation that is not only intersubjective and relational, but actual in the form of community.

To be sure, something more is involved in the passage just cited—namely, Hegel's *kenotic* view of christology. The process of reconciliation begins with the divine-self-divestment (*kenosis*) in incarnation (the particularity of the divine idea). Hegel's account of the Christian version of divine *kenosis* in incarnation includes a double divestment: It includes, on the one hand, God's self-divestment of abstract substance. On the other hand, it includes the son of God, who divests himself of equality with God, and who, in the form of a servant, suffers and is obedient unto death, a death of shame and humiliation on the cross.[188] The death of the mediator makes manifest his full humanity.[189] *Kenosis* expresses not only the self-divestment of the divine (assuming human form), but also the self-emptying of the human in the form of a servant. Hegel captures both senses of *kenosis* with his qualification of *singularity as being-for-others*.[190]

Further, Hegel treats divine *kenosis* also as divine self-differentiation, in which, however, God remains God. The process of reconciliation is brought to completion in *actuality* by the mediator's bringing single individuals back into the unity of spirit—that is, to the cultus, the community, which is *universal singularity*. The work of reconciliation is begun by the historical God-man, but is completed in its contemporary actuality by God as Spirit. Thus kenotic christology implies and requires triunity—that is, triune absolute spirit.

Hegel's account of the objective foundation and reality of reconciliation has a triune theological justification. God is not simply sheer unity, which is negative, but essentially involves self-differentiation, positing of contradiction, and the resolution of contradiction.[191] Considered simply as father, God is taken as abstract, one-sided, and thus not yet true God. Incarnation—that is,

[187] *LPR* 3. 133. [188] *LPR* 3. 323 n. 199. [189] *LPR* 3. 323 n. 199.

[190] Hegel's concept of personhood as being-for-others is echoed (whether by coincidence or deliberately is unknown) by Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, III/2 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1960), §45, Jesus Man for Other Men.

[191] "because the absolute is at first only in-itself [implicit] it equally is not the absolute… [because] the in-itself is only an abstract, one-sided moment. Hence the advance is not superfluous, which it would be if that with which the beginning is made were in truth already the absolute.… Only in its consummation is it the absolute" (*SL* 829).

the faith that the incarnate individual has a divine nature—supersedes the abstract transcendence of God (*das Jenseits Gottes*).[192] But it is spirit itself that sublates and supersedes the other moments, translating the divine "we" of father and son[193] into the spiritual presence of reconciliation:

> God does this and is utterly present to himself in the other whom he has posited (the form of love); but at the same time we must know very well that *God is himself this entire activity*. Merely as the father, God is not yet the truth . . . Rather he is both beginning and end; he is his own presupposition, he constitutes himself as presupposition (this is simply another form of differentiation); he is the eternal process.[194]

That is, "God is spirit, making himself objective and knowing himself in this objectivity: this is concrete identity and thus the idea is also an essential moment, whereas identity without difference is the false product of the understanding and of modern theology."[195] Since God is a unity in and through difference, spirit cannot be reduced to or identified with merely one trinitarian person, much less an abstract unknowable divine essence; rather spirit is the triune God as a concrete, articulated whole, or, more simply, spirit in its community.

6. RELIGION AS COMMUNITY OF DIVINE AND HUMAN

Hegel defines religion as a sphere of absolute spirit, which must be studied as issuing *subjectively* from, and having its home in, the human subject, but which must no less be regarded as *objectively* issuing from absolute spirit, which is spirit in its community.[196] That is, religion is a divine–human community.[197] He develops the broad implications of this in a programmatic statement from his *Lectures on the Proofs for God*:

[192] *LPR* 3. 316 n. 174.

[193] *PhS* §772. Hegel does not use the term "we" to characterize the relation of father and son, but he conceives their relation as a recognitive unity in and through difference, a loving recognition that amounts to the same thing as the "we"—i.e., an articulation that God is love.

[194] *LPR* 3. 284 n. In this important text, Hegel criticizes the trinitarian symbols as representations derived from organic life, which are never to be taken literally because they never correspond to what should be expressed. As Walter Jaeschke points out, Hegel's account in this text conceives the trinitarian relations in terms of Aristotle's *noesis noeseos*—i.e., an analysis of cognition that requires both the cognitive differentiation and the cognitive identity of subject and object.

[195] *LPR* 3. 284 n. [196] *E.* §554.

[197] Hegel observes that the Kantian denial of the possibility of cognition of God, on the one hand, and the modern turn to the subject, on the other, have given religion a purely subjective orientation that has destroyed the cultus. *LPR* 1. 191.

> The object of our concern, the community and communion [*Gemeinschaft*] of God and humanity with each other, is a *community of spirit with spirit*; and it involves the most important questions. *It is a community*, and this very circumstance involves the difficulty of at once *maintaining the difference and of defining it in such a way as to preserve the communion*. That humanity knows God implies, in accord with the essence of community, a *communal knowledge*; that is to say, *humanity knows God only insofar as God knows godself in humanity*. This knowledge is God's self-consciousness, but it is at the same time a knowledge of God on the part of humanity; and this knowledge of God by humanity is the knowledge of humanity by God. The spirit of humanity—to know God—is simply God's Spirit itself. It is here that the questions regarding the freedom of humanity, the union of humanity's individual knowledge and consciousness with the knowledge by which humanity is in communion with God, and the knowledge of God in humanity, come to be discussed. This fullness of relationship between the human spirit and God is not, however, our subject. We have to take up this relationship only in its most abstract aspect, namely in the form of the connection of the finite with the infinite. However strong the contrast is between the poverty of this connection and the wealth of its content, still the logical relation is at the same time the basis for the movement of that fullness of content.[198]

Here Hegel's central thesis is that religion is more than a divine–human relationship, for, since relation is reciprocal, reciprocity in turn constitutes a community of spirit with spirit. To be sure, it was and is a commonplace to speak of religion as a relation of humans to God or the sacred. But under modern philosophical and cultural assumptions such as the Kantian frame, which influences modern philosophy and theology, we are able to speak only of *our* relation—that is, of religion, but not of God godself. Hegel comments that "this perennial explication of religion, its necessity, its usefulness and so on, together with the trivial or even prohibited explication of God, is a peculiar phenomenon of the cultural spirit of our time."[199] Hegel disputes this cultural spirit.

He objects that "a one-sided relation is no relation at all."[200] If religion is merely a one-sided relationship constructed from the human side alone, this implies that God has no independent existence and is merely something posited or produced by us in religion.[201] On the other hand, if it is seriously meant that God is and gives godself in relation to humans, this means something totally different from a mere one-sided projection or postulate. First, it means that a genuine relationship has to be double-sided and reciprocal. This implies not only that humans stand in connection with God, but also that God stands in connection with humans, and that implies some sort of community.

[198] *LProofs*, 126. [199] *LProofs*, 66. [200] *LProofs*, 66. [201] *LProofs*, 66.

Second, it means that, if God has *on God's part* a relationship to us, it is implied that God communicates godself to humanity, and this is to admit that, as Plato and Aristotle asserted when repudiating tragic theology, God is not jealous.[202] Hegel observes that Christianity is even more fully committed to a non-jealous, self-communicating divinity. However, rather than appealing to Christian doctrine to support that claim, Hegel asks: "Why should God not communicate godself?" And he tells the following story:

> It is reported that in Athens there was a law according to which any person who did not allow another to light a candle from his own was to be punished by death. This kind of communication is already found in physical light, which spreads and imparts itself to something else without diminishing itself or losing anything; still more it is the nature of spirit to remain fully in possession of itself while giving another a share of its possession. We believe in God's infinite goodness in nature since God relinquishes natural things . . . to each other and to human beings in particular. Is God to bestow on humans those merely corporeal things that are also God's, and withhold from them the spiritual things that alone can give them true value? It is as absurd to give such notions a place as it is to say of the Christian religion that through it God has been revealed to humanity, and yet to maintain that what has been revealed is that God is not and has not been revealed.[203]

Note that, in Hegel's view, God can communicate godself, enter into relation and community with humans, without suffering loss or diminution, just as light is not diminished when it is shared. Hegel advances this claim in the *Philosophy of Religion*—that God, as self-determining and self-communicating, remains God in relation. For this reason, Hegel's preferred term for God is Spirit in its community.

Religion is conceived broadly by Hegel as a relation of spirit to spirit. That is, he conceives religion in the categories of spirit— namely, mutual divine–human recognition and its resulting community. Each side in its own self-relation is mediated by the other and recognizes itself in the other. To recall Hegel's words cited above, "humanity knows God only insofar as God knows godself in humanity. This knowledge is God's self-consciousness, but it is at the same time a knowledge of God on the part of humanity; and this knowledge of God by humanity is the knowledge of humanity by God." This formulation resembles the basic structure of mutual recognition, according to which "self-consciousness is in and for itself when and through the fact that it is in and for itself for another, that is, it exists only as recognized."[204] The outcome of the process of recognition is that each is free in union with the other—that is, at home with itself in the other. To be sure, this formulation from the *Phenomenology*—like the analysis of the one and the other in

[202] *LProofs*, 66. [203] *LProofs*, 68. [204] *PhS* §178; translation modified.

determinate being in the *Logic*, presupposes that each party is on the same level and shares common features—on the level of objective spirit. Does God then depend on and exist only within human recognition?

When Hegel affirms that God is purposive, he is clear that God's purpose "can be nothing else than God himself." This is Hegel's ontotheological point. However, God's purpose also includes self-communication, which has a reciprocal structure—namely, "that his concept should become *objective* for him and then *return* within him, that he should *possess himself in what is realized*.... The soil in which this purpose is to be found cannot be anything else but spirit as such."[205] Having provided an ontotheological grounding of divine independence, Hegel feels free to speak of divine self-communication and to include in this not only the immanent trinity—the objectification of the Father in the Son—but also what the tradition called the economic trinity—to wit, the creation of a world as "the appearance in which God possesses himself. Without the moment of finitude there is no life, no subjectivity, no living God."[206] However, within and on the basis of God's independence, there can be a certain dependence, even need, including influence from human beings and the world:

> Thus God knows himself in humanity, and human beings, to the extent that they know themselves as spirit and in their truth, know themselves in God. This is the concept of religion, that God knows himself in spirit and spirit knows itself in God. Religion inheres essentially in the concept of God to the extent that God is essentially *for himself*. This is also the meaning of the expression that God is love, i.e., knowing himself in an other of himself. In the loneliness of his being-for-self he feels himself needy and negated, and this deficiency is first overcome when he knows himself in the other. This concept of God and of religion is first attained in the revelatory religion.[207]

Hegel presents a social–personal, panentheistic, *dipolar* concept of God as the true infinite that incorporates the finite within itself.

The claim that as true infinite God includes the finite also reflects the Christian version of the principle of incarnation as divine–human unity. Hegel's is a theology that places incarnation, reconciliation—and therefore also triune spirit—at its center. Moreover, in emphasizing divine self-communication in explicit contrast to the tragic divine and the unknown divine (abstract *Jenseits*), Hegel suggests that, as love, God is the primordial *anti-solipsist* in search of relation to and community with others.[208] And that is why entering into relation and into community is not, in principle, alien to

[205] *LPR* 2. 434; emphasis added. [206] *LPR* 1. 308. [207] *LPR* 1. 465.

[208] Cf. Hegel's adaptation of Schiller's Poem on Friendship cited in the conclusion of the *PhS*, that God is not a lifeless solitary (*leblose Einsame*), but rather Spirit that knows itself as spirit through the recollection and inwardizing of the realm of spirits that "foams forth for Him his own infinitude" (*PhS* §808). Cf. *EL* §143Z.

God nor does it thwart divine purpose. It is also why, in Hegel's account, God endures the contradictions and negations that are present in the failure and even rejection of community, and that constitute evil. According to Hegel, divine incarnation means that not only finitude, but also humanity, death, infinite limitation are taken up into the divine idea.[209] This entails negation and suffering in God. "Love as originating in infinite anguish is precisely the concept of spirit itself."[210] Hegel cites the Lutheran tradition that in the death of God a reversal occurs—namely, death itself is put to death.[211] This reversal is a negation of a negation (death). This is the reason why Hegel asserts that the

> reconciliation in Christ . . . makes no sense if God is not known as the triune God, if it is not recognized that God is, but also is as the other, as self-distinguishing, so that this other is God himself . . . and that the sublation of this difference, this otherness, and the return of love, are the Spirit.[212]

Hegel's critics accused him of identifying the finite and infinite, the human and the divine. They charged that, according to Hegel, to know God one must be God. Göschel defended Hegel's position against such criticism,[213] and Hegel reviewed Göschel's book of aphorisms.[214] In the review, Hegel outlines Göschel's rebuttal of the objection to know God is to be God.[215] This claim is rooted in the confusion of speculative identity as unity-in-and-through-difference, with the abstract identity of the understanding that excludes difference. Hegel observes that Göschel rightly corrects the confusion: identity in the speculative sense is not abstract identity; as a unity in and through difference, speculative identity includes difference as its own determination and self-specification.[216] Hegel affirms Göschel's interpretation that the distinction between divine and human is preserved in their community, citing Göschel's aphorism "God is God only insofar as he knows himself; God's self-knowledge is, further, a self-consciousness in the human and the human knowledge *of* God, which proceeds to human self-knowledge *in* God."[217]

Hegel put the point more clearly and forcefully than Göschel in his account of God's purposive activity in his discussion of Judaism. The purpose of Hegel's God, like the God of Israel, cannot be sheer power. It must be *determinate* power. God's purpose

> can be nothing else than God himself: that his concept should become objective for him and then return within him, that he should possess himself in what is

[209] *LPR* 3. 140. [210] *LPR* 3. 140. [211] *LPR* 3. 323–4 n. [212] *LPR* 3. 327.

[213] Cf. C. F. Göschel, *Aphorismen über Nichtwissen und absolutes Wissen* (Berlin: E. Franklin, 1829).

[214] Hegel cites the Göschel aphorisms in *E.* §564. His "Review of Göschel's Aphorisms," trans. C. Butler, is found in *Miscellaneous Writings of G. W. F. Hegel*, ed. Jon Stewart (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2002), 403–16.

[215] This objection is traceable to Jacobi; see *LProofs*, 111–18.

[216] Hegel, "Review of Göschel's Aphorisms" (*MW* 415 (ET)). [217] *E.* §564.

> realized. . . . his *being recognized in finite spirit is his purpose* . . . . In consciousness he is his own purpose—the *purpose being that he should be recognized and venerated [as God]*.[218]

Further, "for God to be recognized, venerated, honored, means that the finite self-consciousness represents God to itself, knows him as its purpose."[219]

Hegel agrees with Fichte that, if God were sheer object or sheer power, then God could not be known and religion would be based simply on fear. To resolve that problem, Fichte argues that God must be subject, and Hegel adds that God can be known only if substance is equally subject.[220] As far as Hegel is concerned, God is capable, not only of self-knowing and self-purposing, but also of communicating godself to an other and thereby giving the other a share in God's self-knowledge and self-possession. This communal knowledge is, like mutual recognition, a speculative concrete that sublates and supersedes the abstract transcendence of the Beyond (*Jenseits*) and the corresponding non-knowing of God by humans.

These considerations follow from the concept of community and communal knowing. They do not imply divine ontological dependence on the human—for what God "needs" and expects (according to Hegel) is human *recognition* of his independence and glory. But that independence and glory remain undiminished, even if they are not recognized. Similarly community and communal knowing do not imply human apotheosis, as we will see in the next section on the "human side" of the cultus.

Running throughout all of this is a not so suppressed thesis—namely, the subjectivity and personhood of God. A religion that is described as a relation of spirit to spirit, and that places at its center claims of divine love, incarnation, reconciliation, and freedom, requires a personal concept of God as spirit. This concept of God has to be triune, for God must not only differentiate himself, objectify himself, and know himself in another; God must also remain the same—that is, be at home with himself in another and in his differentiation.

7. THE SUBJECTIVE SIDE OF THE CULTUS: UTTER DEPENDENCE AND THEONOMOUS FREEDOM

Hegel underscores the importance of the turn to the subject in Kant's critical philosophy that invokes transcendental subjectivity as formally foundational for objectivity: "From Kant onward all religious faith has fallen within the view that I am the affirmative, the substantial, the essential, that which stands

[218] *LPR* 2. 434; translation modified. [219] *LPR* 2. 435.
[220] Hegel, "Review of Göschel's Aphorisms," *MW* 412 (ET); see also *EL* §§112Z, 194Z.

higher than all these [theological] determinations."[221] Transcendental subjectivity is asymmetrically related to what it constitutes. Hegel claims that modern interpretations of religion influenced by the Kantian frame are problematic because they either exclude the theological object altogether, or, like Kant's practical philosophy, reduce religion and its object to a postulate of morality that answers a subjective need of reason—that is, an "ought to be" that is a spurious infinity.[222] As long as this standpoint, perspective, and approach are adopted—as in modern academic studies of religion—the finite is taken as methodologically foundational for the infinite. For Hegel, this is more than a methodological issue; his view is that within the Kantian frame—the highest standpoint within reflective transcendental philosophy—no religion is possible.[223] For what religion is about is methodologically excluded and declared to be unknowable. Subjective orientation is necessary but insufficient, because "giving religion a purely subjective orientation . . . has destroyed the cultus."[224]

In Hegel's view, religion—that is, the subjective side of the cultus—includes a decentering of the human being in its *immediate singularity*. Hegel describes decentering as self-sublation that is both negative and affirmative.[225] We have already seen Hegel express the basic move of decentering—that is, the reversal of the primacy of subjectivity: "In general reason is the idea and the idea is reason. *We do not possess* the idea, *rather the idea possesses us*, so that reason possesses us, being our substance."[226]

However, decentering does not become explicit and is even prevented when the inherent nullity of contingent finitude—its possible non-existence—is suppressed. The suppression of its inherent nullity conceals its inner disruption—the hour of its birth is the hour of its death. The suppression of the possible non-being of finitude occurs in both traditional metaphysics and modern empiricist thought. As a result of the suppression of its inner nullity, finitude is taken in a wholly affirmative sense, and this results in the following atomistic metaphysical vision: that "the being of the contingent is only its own being, and not the being of an other, the absolutely necessary. . . . The contingent is in this way retained on its own account, separated from the absolutely necessary."[227] Consequently, "it is said that there is no bridge, no passage from

[221] *LPR* 1. 288.

[222] Hegel refers to the modern interpretations that identify religion as immediate knowing and feeling as not incorrect but utterly trivial. "If the science of religion is limited to these propositions it is not worth having, and one cannot see why there is any such thing as theology" (*LPR* 1. 260). Further, "the philosophy of Kant and Fichte sets up the ought as the highest point of the resolution of the contradictions of reason; but the truth is that the ought is only the standpoint which clings to finitude and thus to contradiction" (*SL* 136).

[223] *LPR* 1. 300.

[224] *LPR* 1. 193. For Hegel's quite different view of the matter, cf. *LPR* 1. 383 and *E.* §554.

[225] *LPR* 1. 301–8. [226] *BPhG* 98–9. [227] *LProofs*, 117.

finite being to infinite; the finite is related simply to itself, not to its other."[228] Finitude is declared to be an absolute limit that makes the elevation of spirit to God impossible.

As we saw in Chapter 2, Hegel recasts the cosmological proof as an elevation of spirit to God. Elevation implies a *transition* and *passage* from finite to infinite. However, this is not a transition or projection in which the finite is foundational for the infinite. Rather it is the infinite that is foundational for the finite. Hegel explains:

> In ordinary inference, the being of the finite appears as the ground of the absolute; because the finite *is*, therefore the absolute is. But the truth is that the absolute is, because finite is the inherently self-contradictory opposition, because it is *not*. In the former meaning, the inference runs thus: the being of the finite is the being of the absolute; but in the latter, thus: the non-being of the finite is the being of the absolute.[229]

To be sure, Hegel is not asserting that there is no finitude, for that would be acosmic, and Hegel criticizes Spinoza on just this point. He is rather appealing to the immanent nullity inherent in contingent finitude that metaphysics and ordinary inference suppress: its possible non-existence *and* possible existence. Thus the last sentence in the passage just quoted can be expressed more affirmatively thus: "The being of the contingent is *not* its own being but *only* the being of an other, and indeed it is defined as the being of its other, the absolutely necessary."[230] If this seems too close to Spinoza's acosmism, it must be noted that what distinguishes Hegel from Spinoza is Hegel's doctrine of the ideality of the finite, which he expresses thus:

> Or to put it otherwise, the being that is defined as finite has this quality of finitude in the sense that it does not stand independently over against the infinite, but rather *is only ideal, a moment of the infinite*. Consequently the minor premise, 'The finite *is*', falls away in any affirmative sense; and if we can indeed say 'it exists', this only means that its existence is merely an appearance [*Erscheining*]. Precisely this—*that the finite world is only an appearance—is the absolute power of the infinite*. For this dialectical nature of the finite and its expression, the form of the syllogism of the understanding has no place.[231]

The metaphysics of the understanding fails when it seeks to conceive the elevation of spirit to God, because elevation involves a transition from finite

[228] *LProofs*, 117. [229] *SL* 443. [230] *LProofs*, 117.

[231] "Fragment on the Cosmological Proof," *LProofs*, 163; emphasis added. For the ideality of the finite, cf. *EL* §95R; *SL* 149–56. The sense of ideality is expressed in Hegel's doctrine of the dialectical syllogism: "In this ideality of its moments, syllogistic reasoning acquires the determination of essentially containing the negation of the terms and determinacies through which it proceeds—and hence that of being a mediation through the sublation of mediation . . ." (*EL* §192R). "It is the same negation that is put into practice in the elevation of spirit to God . . ." (*EL* §204R).

to infinite, that manifests both the absolute power of the infinite, and the utter dependence of the finite on infinite—that is, the finite is the appearance of the infinite. The latter in Hegel's view expresses the ideality of the finite that best articulates its ontological status within the true infinite. The ideality of the finite negates the modern view that the finite is external to and independent of the infinite. Hegel's position is not dualism, not atheistic naturalism, not pantheism (the all-one doctrine), but rather panentheism, the immanence of the finite in the true infinite that includes human dependence and founds human freedom: "the highest independence of the human being is to know himself as utterly destined by the absolute idea; this is the consciousness and attitude that Spinoza calls *amor intellectualis dei* [the intellectual love of God]."[232]

Hegel frequently cites the expression that the "fear of the lord is the beginning of wisdom." This means that, in utter dependence on God, there is a reversal: human beings are liberated from all particular finite dependencies. The fear of the lord is the sublation of all finite dependencies, of all particular interests, including one's own self-interest, but also nullity and negativity.[233] Within this utter dependence Hegel describes a powerful reversal and validating affirmation: Job's fear of the Lord turns in a flash into absolute trust that sublates all dependence.[234] This affirmative sublation is the ideality of the finite in the infinite. The ideality of the finite means not its disappearance but its validation: "the infinite is . . . not merely negative, a beyond, but also affirmative . . . This means that the infinite consists in inwardly determining itself, or validating the moment of finitude within itself (but as ideal)."[235] For Hegel the affirmative, validating sense of the self-sublation of the finite in the infinite is the issue on which the question of religion in modernity turns. Hegel criticizes both metaphysics and modern Enlightenment thought for conceiving the infinite as abstract *Jenseits* and for suppressing the inherent nullity of finitude so that it appears independent of the infinite. These twin conceptions, taken together, imply an unbridgeable gulf between finite and infinite that separates the finite from the infinite. This makes any transition, including the elevation of spirit to God, impossible. He writes: "The metaphysical proofs of God . . . are deficient explanations and descriptions of the elevation of spirit . . . to God, *because they do not express, or rather do not bring out, the moment of negation that is contained in this elevation* . . . "[236] The true infinite, constituted dialectically as negation of negation, rules out the view of the finite as independent of and external to the infinite; thus there is no gulf between them.[237] Since the sublation of the finite as an ideal moment of the true infinite includes its validation, the true

[232] *EL* §158Z. [233] *LPR* 2. 443–4. [234] *LPR* 2. 445–7. [235] *LPR* 2. 258.
[236] *EL* §50R; cf. §§192R, 204R. [237] *LPR* 1. 424–5.

infinite must not be confused with abstract *Jenseits*. It is Hegelian panentheism —that is, a dipolar concept of God as spirit in his community.

In his *Philosophy of Religion* Hegel elaborates further on the dialectic of self-sublation and validation of the finite by the infinite:

> A standpoint must be pointed out wherein the I in this singularity has renounced and does renounce itself. This . . . renunciation takes place at a higher standpoint. I must be the particular subjectivity that has indeed been sublated; hence I must recognize something *objective*, *which is actual being in and for itself*, which does indeed count as true for me, *which is recognized as the affirmative posited for me*; *something in which I am negated as this I, but in which at the same time I am contained as free and by which my freedom is maintained.* This implies that I am determined and *maintained* as universal, and I only count for myself as universal generally. But this is now none other than the standpoint of thinking reason [*denkende Vernunft*] generally, and religion itself is this activity, it is thinking reason in its activity. Philosophy also is thinking reason . . . [238]

This self-sublating consciousness of finitude is not a consciousness that asserts itself as the measure of all things,[239] but rather one that recognizes and acknowledges its own actuality as finite as measured against and grounded in the actual presence of the infinite.[240] Hegel describes decentering as withdrawal into ground in the *Logic*:

> Finite things . . . are simply this, to be contradictory and disrupted within themselves and to return into their ground. . . . contingent being in its own self *withdraws into its ground in which it is sublated*, and further . . . by this withdrawal *it posits the ground only in such a manner that it rather constitutes itself as posited*.[241]

This reversal of attitude constitutes for Hegel the *habitus* of fine art, religion, and philosophy as substantial interests and concerns of absolute spirit.[242]

Hegel elaborates on the consciousness of being possessed by reason and the absolute idea as inclusion and participation in a substantial, vital, universal life:

> I am determined here as finite, but in a genuine fashion; I am finite as distinct from this object, I am the particular over against the universal, what is accidental

[238] *LPR* 1. 302; emphasis added.

[239] "The finite that inflates itself to the infinite is only abstract identity, inwardly empty, the highest form of untruth—all that is false and evil" (*LPR* 1. 302 n. 77).

[240] *EL* §60: "It is only lack of consciousness . . . if we do not see that it is precisely the designation of something as finite . . . that contains the proof of the *actual presence of the infinite* . . . and that there can be no knowledge of limit unless the unlimited is on this side (*diesseits*) within consciousness" (emphasis added).

[241] *SL* 443; emphasis added.

[242] This reversal of attitude distinguishes Hegel's philosophy from what Stanley Rosen (*HSL* 10) has called the "nihilistic chatter" of contemporary analytic philosophy and deconstruction as secular professional schools and disciplines.

> to this substance. But I am determined as a moment, as something distinct; thus I am defined simultaneously [as something] that does not have being-for-itself, but which really has renounced itself, and knows itself as finite. For this universal object has the content within itself—it is not the hollow or empty universal, but rather the inwardly self-moving substance. Hence it is the absolute fulfillment: all content, all determination, all particularity belong to it.
>
> Thus I am in the same case; my intuiting of myself as finite is my knowing about myself that I am a moment in this life, a moment that has its subsistence as this particular being only in this substance. In this way *I am now actually posited as finite*. And thereby I sublate myself, I do not maintain myself as something immediate, something affirmative. *The universal is, and I only have my subsistence in it, I am only a moment of it*. I can only posit myself as renouncing myself. Abstractly speaking, therefore, this is the concrete, true relationship of the subjective I in religion, in which God, the absolute in principle, is the affirmative.[243]

In these remarks Hegel is setting forth the speculative view of religion. Religion for Hegel is an important dimension of the speculative concrete. The speculative concrete is embodied in his account of the cultus, which he characterizes as the *unio mystica*—but which he understands in his own sense, not the ordinary senses.[244]

In his account of the cultus, there is a negative aspect and an affirmative aspect. The negative aspect of the cultus is the practical activity of the subject on itself—namely, it surrenders and lets go of its narrowly self-determined self-possessed subjectivity, which occurs symbolically in the praxis of sacrifice. Sacrifice is rooted in the consciousness of being in the presence of an other who displaces all ownership claims. Beginning with such externals, there is an essential reference to the inner life that comes to the fore in confession, purification, repentance, and so on.[245] Corresponding to the letting-go of its self-centered autonomous subjectivity, there is a reversal—that is, a finding of itself in union with and belonging to the very object before which the subject let go of itself; the subject is now posited as free in its other.[246] This affirmative moment of union develops into a consciousness that "the subject possesses absolute, infinite value, being conscious that it is the absolute object of the infinite love of God."[247]

Hegel's most complete elaboration of the cultus, found in the 1827 Lectures, distinguishes the theoretical from the practical dimension of the cultus. In the theoretical relation, "I have God as my object and am engrossed therein,"[248] knowing nothing of myself.[249] On the other hand, in the practical relationship I have not only to know the object with which I am engrossed, but also "to

[243] *LPR* 1. 306–7.
[244] *LPR* 1. 444–5. *EL* §82Z. For the speculative concrete, cf. Sect. 2B.
[245] *LPR* 1. 350.
[246] *LPR* 1. 351.
[247] *LPR* 1. 352.
[248] *LPR* 1. 441.
[249] *LPR* 1. 442.

know myself as filled with this object, to know it as within me and likewise myself as within this object that is the truth—and so to know myself in the truth."[250] This unity has to be brought forth by action, the praxis of the cultus. However, while the cultus has both theoretical and practical dimensions, it transcends both of these one-sided limited spheres.

> In the cultus on the contrary, God is one side, I am on the other and the determination is *the including within my own self, of myself with God*, the knowing of myself within God and of God with me. The cultus involves giving oneself this supreme, absolute enjoyment. . . . I take part in it with my particular subjective personhood, knowing myself as this individual included in and with God . . . [251]

Cultic praxis presupposes that the reconciliation between God and humanity is implicitly consummated. While it is brought forth in the cultus, it is not here a matter of having to produce reconciliation absolutely for the first time; instead it needs to be produced only for me, the particular person. The appropriation of reconciliation by individuals rests on the conviction "that God alone is true actuality, that insofar as I have actuality I have it only in God. Since God alone is actuality, I should have my truth and actuality in God. . . . That is the foundation of the cultus."[252]

> It is within the cultus itself that God *is* and that God is the true *actuality*, namely, this ground. What is elicited by means of the cultus is what was formerly called the *unio mystica* . . . . the feeling of joy—that by his grace I am with God, that God's spirit lives in me, the consciousness of my reconciliation and union with God—is the innermost feature of the cultus.[253]

In his 1831 Lectures Hegel elaborates on the conditions of possibility of the reconciliation enjoyed in the cultus. These remarks exclude heteronomous interpretations. The unity of the divine and human constitutive of the cultus is grounded in incarnation:

> The possibility of reconciliation is present only when the implicitly subsisting unity of divine and human nature is known. Human beings can know themselves to be taken up into God *only when God is not something alien to them, only when they are not merely an extrinsic accident upon God's nature, but rather when they are taken up into God in accordance with their essence and freedom.* The implicitly subsisting unity of divine and human nature must be revealed to humanity in an objective way; this is what happened through the incarnation of God.[254]

The divine–human unity manifest in incarnation is a third alternative to heteronomy (dualism, alienation) and autonomy (the gods as one-sided

[250] *LPR* 1. 442. [251] *LPR* 1. 443. [252] *LPR* 1. 444.
[253] *LPR* 1. 444 n. 176–445. *EL* §82Z. Cf. Sect. 2B for the speculative concrete.
[254] *LPR* 3. 314 n. 173 W1; emphasis added.

projections). We have seen that, for Hegel, true freedom consists not in withdrawal or separation, but rather in union with others.[255] In the above passage Hegel gives a theological trinitarian interpretation of this claim. Communion with God is not heteronomy, but rather theonomy, a divine–human unity and community that, grounded in incarnation and divine love, includes and validates human freedom and independence.

Theonomy—the subsisting unity of divine and human—implies that subjectivity is present in God—that is, that God is personhood (*Persönlichkeit*).

> The possibility of reconciliation resides only in the fact that the implicitly subsisting unity of divine and human nature is known; this is the necessary foundation. Human beings can know themselves to be taken up into God inasmuch as God is not something alien to them and they are not related to him as an extrinsic accident—[that is,] *when they are taken up into God in accordance with their essence, their freedom and subjectivity. But this is possible only in virtue of the fact that this subjectivity of human nature is [present] within God himself.*[256]

Hegel affirms the true infinite—that is, that finite and infinite are *not* mutually exclusive opposites; consequently finitude is present in God (that is, the ideality of the finite). Here he connects the true infinite doctrine with incarnation and triune absolute spirit: the subjectivity of human nature is present within God himself. God is subject—that is, personhood (*Persönlichkeit*). Incarnation manifests divine personhood. "As spirit . . . God contains the moment of subjectivity and singularity [*Einzelheit*] in himself."[257]

8. DIVINE PERSONHOOD AS THE CONDITION OF CONSOLATION (*TROST*)

Divine personhood is the basis of the consolation afforded by Christian religion. The consolation that Christianity offers is, put simply, that God is not merely substance, but subject, more precisely, tragically suffering, reconciling love. Hegel elaborates these claims through a comparison of the

[255] *E.* §431.

[256] *LPR* 3. 314 n. 173 W2. Cf. Hegel's remarks about the Greek Gods as being ideal projections of the human, whether individual or collective. The humanity of these ideal shapes made it possible for the Greeks to recognize themselves in them, i.e., the gods are not alien to the human. For the Greeks the gods and the humans have the same content (*LPR* 2. 460). Consequently, "in recognizing their gods . . . they freely venerate them as powers that dwell within them" (*LPR* 2. 480). "The defect of these gods is not that they are too anthropomorphic, but rather that there is still too little of humanity in them" (*LPR* 2. 660 n.). "Both the Greek gods and the Greeks are subject to blind fate" (*LPR* 2. 460; *LPR* 2. 651).

[257] *LPR* 3. 315 n. This is Hegel's anti-formalist corrective of the abstract universal in theology.

Christian with other views, most notably the Religions of Spiritual Individuality—that is, Judaism and the Greek religion of beauty. Hegel comments on ancient Greek fate piety—which did without consolation or reconciliation—yet nevertheless managed to find peace, if not exactly satisfaction, in subjection to fate:

> The sway of this ancient destiny is tinged with a sadness that is not driven away by defiance or bitterness, nor is it made odious; and all lamentation is suppressed by silence rather than stilled by the healing of the heart. The satisfaction found by spirit in the thought of necessity is to be sought only in this: that spirit abides by the abstract result of necessity, expressed in the words, 'it *is* so' . . . In this pure *is* there is no longer any content; all purposes, all interests all wishes, even the concrete feeling of life have disappeared and vanished in it.[258]

Fate piety is distinguished by its renunciation of its freedom and purposes in confrontation with the demonic divine and cosmic chaos. "It thus transforms into freedom the force exercised on it by fate."[259] In such complete acceptance of fate there is total self-renunciation. The tragic heroes exhibit the freedom and strength of the renunciation whereby the heart can make itself the grave of the heart. "So when the heart inwardly renounces itself, it leaves to the force of fate's compulsion nothing on which it can lay hold. What is crushed by fate's force is an existence devoid of heart . . . "[260] There is no reconciliation or need thereof, for there is nothing left to reconcile.

Hegel observes that, in such culture and religion, there was no need of consolation "because subjectivity had not yet attained its infinite significance."[261] However, he expresses admiration for the nobility and spiritual strength exhibited by the Greek tragic heroes in their voluntary acceptance of and subjection to fate. When Hegel compares fate piety with modernity, in which subjectivity and subjective freedom are taken for granted, the ancients come off more favorably. The typically modern disposition stubbornly pursues its subjective purposes; when forced to renounce and give them up, the modern mentality can console itself only with the prospect of receiving compensation for its loss—albeit in some other shape. Subjective suffering and loss have an exchange value. However, what moderns are willing to exchange their subjective freedoms and purposes for is often petty, less noble, and less worthy than the ancients, who renounce all hope of consolation and simply will their own fate.

However, Hegel notes that Christianity asserts the infinite value of subjectivity and freedom—this is why slavery is no longer legitimate and in the process of abolition.[262] The infinite value of subjectivity raises the stakes

[258] *LProofs*, 108. [259] *LProofs*, 109. [260] *LProofs*, 109.
[261] *EL* §147Z. [262] *PR* §57; *EL* §163Z.

for consolation infinitely, which has both theological and anthropological implications:

> As we all know, Christianity teaches that God wills that all humans should be saved [1 Tim. 2–4] and that means that subjectivity has infinite value. More precisely then, the consoling power of the Christian religion consists in the fact that *God himself is known as absolute subjectivity, and this subjectivity contains the moment of particularity within itself*. Hence *our particularity too is recognized as something that is not just to be abstractly negated*; it must at the same time be preserved.[263]

The justification for the doctrine of the infinite value of human subjectivity is not simply that God is absolute subjectivity, but that God is trinitarian absolute subjectivity that includes particularity—that is, incarnation—that validates human particularity.[264]

This passage from the *Encyclopedia* should be viewed in the larger context of *Determinate Religion*—namely, Hegel's claim that Christianity is the sublation of "the Jewish view that God is essentially for thought alone, and the sensuousness of the Hellenic beauty of shape."[265] Judaism comprehends God as spiritual subjectivity that exists as such only for thought.[266] God is self-contained substantial power, which distinguishes itself radically from everything finite. However, as spiritual subjectivity, God is not simply sheer power, but self-determining, purposive power, and is wise in his actions.[267] God's purpose must be actual in human self-consciousness.[268] However, it cannot be sensed, but is solely for thought—that is, for spirit.[269]

What then is God's purpose? In Section 1 we discovered that, as free, self-determining spiritual subjectivity, God is his own purpose. However, Hegel adds that this purpose also requires actualization in human self-consciousness. God's purpose is to be freely *recognized* and *venerated as God*:

> The purpose . . . can be nothing else than God himself, that his concept should become objective for him and then return within him, that he should possess himself in what is realized. . . . If we speak of purpose, then it cannot be mere power; it must be somehow determined as well. The soil in which this purpose is to be found cannot be anything else but spirit as such. And since in spirit as consciousness God is purpose in the spirit which is set over and against him, therefore his being represented, his being recognized in finite spirit, *is* his purpose. . . . he is his own purpose—*the purpose being that he should be recognized and venerated*.[270]

[263] *EL* §147Z; emphasis added. [264] *LPR* 2. 258. [265] *LPR* 2. 660 n.
[266] *LPR* 2. 375.
[267] *LPR* 2. 382–3. [268] *LPR* 2. 385.
[269] *LPR* 2. 387. Hegel corrects and completes Kant's botched execution of the approach to God through practical reason and freedom. Cf. *E.* §552.
[270] *LPR* 2. 434; emphasis added.

This important text makes clear the theological foundation of consolation (*Trost*) and makes explicit the concept of recognition inherent in Hegel's account of spirit and religion. Kant claimed that only a free being is capable of apprehending obligations imposed by the moral law. Hegel adds that only a free being can recognize the freedom and rational purposes of another, including another free being's most fundamental purpose—namely, the demand to be recognized by other(s). Moreover, it is not only humans, but also God, whose purpose and demand it is to be recognized.[271] This is why Hegel asserts that "this [mutually validating] relationship of spirit to spirit lies at the basis of religion."[272] The personhood of God and its recognition are indispensable *theological* concepts in Hegel's *Philosophy of Religion*.

Further, as the above passage on the consolation afforded by the Christian religion makes clear, consolation depends on (1) the fact that here God godself is known as absolute subjectivity and personhood, and (2) that absolute subjectivity includes the moment of particularity (*Besonderheit*). If God includes human particularity, this refers above all to the concept of incarnation. (3) Incarnation requires the triune concept of God, which includes a revaluation of freedom, subjectivity, and particularity, both divine and human: "This personhood, or infinitude of the subject . . . is . . . subjectivity as such, the absolutely infinite form. . . . [it] *is what power or the god of substantiality still lacked* . . . . Only infinite subjectivity has an infinite purpose, i.e., itself."[273] The doctrine that God is triune spirit contains the moment of particularity, which in turn grounds and justifies the particularity of human subjectivity and subjective freedom. Both are sublated in the universal singularity constituting divine–human community. The consolation consists in the affirmative validation God confers on human subjectivity—namely, the recognition of its infinite worth. For Hegel, the Christian religion recognizes and asserts the infinite worth of the human being as grounded in the infinite personhood and humanity of God. For this reason, human subjectivity must not be abstractly negated, but rather *recognized* (*anerkannt*), liberated from slavery, preserved, and upheld in its freedom.[274]

[271] Hegel mentions the Christian triune absolute spirit in his analysis of the religion of spiritual individuality, and explicates it thus: "According to his true idea, as self-consciousness that is in and for itself, God himself is spirit; he produces himself also, he presents himself as being-for-other—this is what we call his 'Son,' the configuration he assumes. In his own shape-taking, the other side of the process is at least present, when he distinguishes himself from the Son and loves the Son, positing himself as identical with, but at the same time as distinct. The configuration . . . then appears as totality . . . that is kept alive in love—here for the first time spirit is in and for itself" (*LPR* 2. 377–8). Hotho's note adds that the relation of trinitarian persons is a recognitive one. *LPR* 2. 378 n. 371.

[272] *LPR* 1. 383. [273] *LPR* 2. 512; emphasis added.

[274] Hegel suggests that, since the infinite value of human subjectivity depends on absolute mediation, immortality is a soteriological–christological postulate. *LPR* 3. 138.

For Hegel, the true infinite means that there is no unbridgeable chasm between finite and infinite, but rather a free communicative relation between divine and human. The possibility of a communicative exchange—mutual recognition—is inherent in Hegel's remark that, "in the cultus, the subject is put on an identical footing with the divine."[275] This "identical footing" does not mean that the human being is identical with God, any more than being "in God" means that the human being *is* God. Rather, it reflects the unity-in-and-through-difference constitutive of the true infinite in the determinate shape of community and communal knowing. God is not jealous, but self-communicating, and within the cultus both sides, despite their differences, stand in a communicative relation, reciprocal self-recognition in other that is unity-in-and-through-difference—that is, a free community.[276]

Hegel elaborates the affirmative, higher view of consolation afforded by the Christian religion through a comparative analysis with ancient Greek religion/theology that goes to the heart of the matter: does consolation depend on divine personhood? If so, what sort of personhood? A personification? Or self-determining personhood? Hegel explains:

> the gods of the Ancients were likewise regarded as personal, of course; but the personhood of Zeus or of Apollo and of the others, is not an actual personhood but a [poetically] represented one. Or, to put it another way, these gods are merely personifications [*Personifikationen*]; they do not *know themselves* as such; *they are only known about* instead. We also find this defect and this impotence of the ancient gods in the religious consciousness of the Ancients, in that they regarded the gods themselves, and not only human beings, as subject to fate—a fate that had to be represented as concealed necessity, and hence as what is thoroughly impersonal, devoid of selfhood and unseeing.[277]

Hegel demythologizes Greek religion. The personhood of Zeus or Apollo, while beautifully represented by the poets, is not an actual personhood, but a personification. However, such personification is not sheer fabrication or fiction, for "poetizing is not the same as inventing or lying."[278] Rather it is a poetic–dramatic representation of a people's spirit, history, and culture.[279] According to Greek religion, there is a substantial identity of content between the Greek Gods and Greek ethical life and cultural institutions. For this reason, Hegel claims that Greek religion

[275] *LPR* 1. 361 n.
[276] See Hegel's comments on the importance of divine self-communication. *LProofs*, 66–8.
[277] *EL* §147Z. [278] *LPR* 2. 472.
[279] Hegel claims that the central issue in Greek religion is the subordination of the forces of nature to spirit, which is reflected in Greek theogony. In the outcome of that theogonic struggle, the political gods such as Zeus emerged victorious over the Titans. However, according to the Greeks, even the Olympians were finite like human beings; both were subject to a higher power of fate, blind necessity. *LPR* 2. 462–9, 645–52.

> is a religion of humanity, in that concrete *human beings are present to themselves in their gods* according to what they *are*—their needs, passions, habits, spirit . . . In other words we say that their gods have the very same content as is also the content of concrete human beings. . . . there is in god no content that is not familiar . . . nothing they do not find, do not know within themselves.[280]

For example "these divine powers are the people's own customs, their ethical life . . . their own spirit . . . Thus Athena is the city and also the goddess."[281] Again these are not mere projections, because the gods are neither simply inner (merely subjective) nor simply outer (mundane prosaic objects) but both.[282] The substantial content of the gods is Greek ethical life, and Hegel captures this free but one-sided identity between the human and the divine in this religion of humanity when he claims that the personhood of Zeus or Apollo is by no means simply fiction or merely subjective. However, Zeus is an abstract personification—that is, the Greek Gods are known, but they do not themselves know, and are subject to blind fate, devoid of selfhood and unseeing.[283]

The foregoing view is not merely Hegel's opinion; according to the Greeks themselves, their gods are subject to a higher power—namely, fate—a concealed necessity that is impersonal, devoid of self, and incomprehensible.[284] Thus Greek fate piety, which by its own account asserts the impotence of both the gods and humans vis-à-vis the power of blind fate, is a reason why ancient Greek culture did not sufficiently recognize subjective freedom, tolerated the practice of slavery, and did without reconciliation and consolation. Instead the Greeks developed a heroic piety of utter self-renunciation and subjection to fate and necessity. While Hegel is a fan of Greek culture who boasted that he had read all the Greek tragedies, he is also critical of it when, for example, he claims that both the anthropology and the theology of Greek religion are deficient, because there is too little consciousness of subjective freedom in the former, and too little authentic humanity in the latter. For Hegel, the problem with the Greek gods is *not* that they are too anthropomorphic; rather "there is still too little that is human in God"—namely, human subjectivity has not yet been recognized as possessing infinite worth.[285]

On the other hand, Hegel interprets Christianity as also incorporating and transforming Jewish monotheism—that God is exclusively for thought, is self-determining purposive activity with the purpose of self-communication and recognition. Christianity shares with Judaism the critique of idolatry and the claim that God is exclusively for thought. However, in Hegel's view Christianity also incorporates the Greek view, that the other moment of divine life is its

[280] *LPR* 2. 460. [281] *LPR* 2. 479.
[282] Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Art* (1823), ed. and trans. R. F. Brown (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 262–7.
[283] See n. 277. [284] *LPR* 2. 651–2. [285] *LPR* 2. 660 n.

externalization in human shape—that is, incarnation—so that this shape is involved in it as its manifestation. Nevertheless, Christianity retains elements of Jewish conception of divine sublimity in which God distinguishes himself from and remains superior to his manifestation even within it. This sublimity qualifies the simple identity (in the Greek religion of beauty) between God's being-for-self and the external medium in which God manifests Godself.[286]

The Jewish God and Christian God are freely self-determining and self-purposing and are apprehended in thought, including recognition. God's being as grasped in thought is independent of representation and poetic imagery. God's wisdom and purpose are manifest in consciousness rather than directly in nature or beauty, because God's purpose is to be recognized by human beings, and human beings are to respond by recognizing, acknowledging, and venerating God as God.[287]

Moreover, the Christian concept of incarnation modifies both Jewish monotheism and Greek Religions of Beauty. While Hegel speaks of the humanity of God, this claim is developed from the concept and is a soteriological–metaphysical claim articulated in incarnation and trinity. Divine incarnation means that

> humanity must be grasped in the divine or in God as *this* human being; but only as a moment, as one of the persons of God, in such a way that this actually existing human being is posited in God, but as taken up into infinitude.[288]

> This externalization and manifestation is taken back again into the One, who thus for the first time is present as spirit for thought and for the community. The single, actually existing human is sublated and is posited in God as a moment, *one of the persons of God*. In this way, *humanity, as this human being, is for the first time truly within God, the appearance of the divine is thus absolute, and its element is spirit itself*. The Jewish view that God is essentially for thought alone, and the sensuousness of the Hellenic beauty of shape, are equally contained in this process of divine life, and being sublated, they are freed from their limitedness.[289]

The importance of Hegel's reconstruction of the trinity in terms of the concept, above all its *Einzelheit*—its concrete universality—can be seen in this passage: *this* single, actually existing human being is sublated and posited in God as one of the persons of God, so that, in this way, humanity as *this* human being is truly within God and its element is spirit itself.

Consequently, in sublating these different theologies and transforming them into his concept of the true infinite, Hegel asserts that "the Christian God, in contrast [to the ancient Greek Gods] is not merely known, but *utterly self-knowing*, and not a merely imaginary personhood, [not a personification

[286] *LPR* 2. 678. [287] *LPR* 2. 679.
[288] *LPR* 2. 660 n. W1. [289] *LPR* 2. 660 n. W2; emphasis added.

of nature or polis] but rather the *absolutely actual personhood* [*Persönlichkeit*]."[290] The Christian God exists in and for godself (per the ontological proof), and is self-purposing and self-manifesting. As self-determining, God surpasses blind necessity and fate. God is not jealous, but rather self-communicating; what God communicates and purposes is not sheer power, but that God is love. God overcomes estrangement, effects reconciliation, and restores freedom. In all this the triune God is both the form and the content of divine self-communication, the "absolutely actual personhood."

This trinitarianism is surely central to Hegel's account of consolation. It is Hegel's answer to the question of consolation that was also Job's problem. If for Job the abstract fear of the Lord turns in a flash into absolute trust and union with God whose absolute power dissolves finite dependencies and validates and liberates individuals by affirming them as ends,[291] we can say that, for Hegel, what consoles is the self-sacrificing love of God, who out of compassion identifies with and shares human finitude, and, by obedient suffering to the point of death, puts death itself to death, and is resurrected as absolute spirit. Thus, for Hegel,

> the consoling power of the Christian religion consists in the fact that God himself is known as *absolute subjectivity, and this subjectivity contains the moment of particularity within itself*. Hence our particularity too is recognized as something that is not just to be abstractly negated; it must at the same time be preserved.[292]

For Hegel, consolation means that the human being "possesses absolute, infinite value . . . being conscious that it is the absolute object of the infinite love of God . . . "[293] The human capacity for infinite value, from which the question of immortality arises, is not innate or immediate, but rather Christologically–soteriologically *mediated*. What such mediation reveals is that "singular subjectivity has an infinite, eternal *vocation* to be a *citizen* of the Kingdom of God."[294]

Hegel's theology of consolation also differs from traditional theology as exemplified by St Anselm. We have already seen that Hegel's organic model of the ontological proof goes beyond Anselm's metaphysics. Anselm conceives not only the proof, but also God's love, compassion, and so on, in terms of traditional metaphysics—that is, abstract immutable transcendence. Addressing the deity, Anselm reasons thus:

> If thou are passionless [that is, non-relative, abstractly independent, immutable], thou dost not feel sympathy; and if thou dost not feel sympathy, thy heart is not

[290] *EL* §147Z; emphasis added. [291] *LPR* 2. 258, 443–7.
[292] *EL* §147Z. [293] *LPR* 1. 352.
[294] *LPR* 3. 138; emphasis added. Hegel adds that "eternal vocation is defined as a future of immortality," but, present or future, this is a socially mediated immortality of individuals as *members* of the beloved community or as "*citizens* of the Kingdom of God."

> wretched from sympathy for the wretched; but this it is to be compassionate. But if thou art not compassionate, whence cometh so great consolation to the wretched? . . .
>
> Truly thou are compassionate in terms of our experience, but thou art not so in terms of thine own. For when thou beholdest us in our wretchedness, we experience the effect of compassion, but thou dost not experience the feeling. Therefore thou art both compassionate, because thou dost save the wretched and spare those who sin against thee; and not compassionate, because thou art affected by no sympathy for wretchedness.[295]

The defects of classical metaphysics that distort Anselm's account of divine compassion are on display here—that is, the divine immutability and impassibility that exclude sympathy, and the one-sided, non-reciprocal view of relation. Traditional theology conceived these affirmations of God's sympathy, compassion, and love as one-sided, asymmetrical relations—that is, as relations and effects that are asserted as real on the side of the finite, but on the side of the divine are interpreted as ideal—that is, as subjective representations without any basis in the abstract immutable, apathetic divine itself.

Charles Hartshorne identifies the difficulty in Anselm's account: the recipients of divine sympathy and compassion experience the *effects* of sympathy and compassion, but not the sympathy and compassion itself.[296] As immutable and impassible, God is apathetic, exalted above the *pathos* of sympathy and compassion. The metaphysical concepts and language used to express the claims of love and compassion, not only distort those claims, but appear to undermine them. The one-sided, asymmetrical relation between God and humans appears to undermine the central claims that God is sympathetic and compassionate love.

Stated otherwise, in classical metaphysics, God remains *unrelated in spite of relation*. This paradoxical formulation reveals the underlying conceptual framework of the understanding "whose relations always leave the manifold of related terms *as* a manifold, and whose unity is always a unity of opposites *left* as opposites."[297] Because relation is external, terms can be related only through external power and force—that is, heteronomously. This framework constitutes relation as alienation, and has a deficient concept of community; the kingdom of God is conceived here as "a union through [heteronomous] domination, the power of a stranger over a stranger . . . "[298]

The classical view fails to offer a conception of religion, relation, and deity adequate to support its claims of divine sympathy and compassion. This inadequacy is clear from the opening sentence of Anselm: the concept of

[295] Anselm, *Proslogium*, ch. viii, in *Basic Writings*, trans. S. N. Deane (Lasalle, IL: Open Court Publishing, 1945), 13–14, cited by Charles Hartshorne, *The Divine Relativity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948), 54.

[296] Hartshorne, *Divine Relativity*, 55. [297] *ETW* 304. [298] *ETW* 278.

God is not only abstract, but immutable and impassible. Anselm's discourse about divine sympathy and compassion contrasts sharply with Hegel's, who asserts (1) that a one-sided relation is no relation at all;[299] that is, that relation is inherently double-sided and reciprocal; (2) that God is both absolute and related;[300] (3) that, in reciprocal relation, God remains God;[301] (4) that God suffers: "the life of Spirit is not the life that shrinks from death and keeps itself untouched by devastation, but rather the life that endures it and maintains itself in it. It wins its truth only when, in utter dismemberment, it finds itself";[302] (5) in explicit reference to the life and death of Jesus, that this death is not merely the death of this individual;[303] rather what it means is that

> God is dead, which means that the human, the finite, the fragile, the weak, the negative are themselves a moment of the divine, that they are within God himself, that finitude, negativity, otherness are not outside of God, and do not, as otherness, hinder unity with God. Otherness, the negative, is known to be a moment of the divine nature itself. This involves the highest idea of spirit;[304]

(6) that the death of God undergoes a reversal, a negation of negation that is the death of death;[305] and (7) that the death of God is the expression of the highest love, the supreme surrender of self in the other, the divinity in this universal identity with other-being, death.[306] Hegel will have none of the potential mockery implicit in the traditional view as stated by Anselm, which asserts that God's love means that humans receive only the effects of God's love, sympathy, and compassion, but not the love, sympathy, and compassion of God themselves (because the realities designated by such terms are incompatible with an impassible being). This is what is at stake in the contrast between the abstract God of substance metaphysics—characterized by H. A. Wolfson as an "eternal paralytic"—and Hegel's reconstruction of substance as subject—that is, the living God as triune absolute spirit.[307]

Hegel agrees with Anselm that God is love, but he finds it necessary to correct the distortions that classical metaphysics imposes on Anselm's philosophy and theology. More importantly, Hegel identifies the self-emptying love of God that goes to the extreme of death in infinite anguish,[308] as central to his account of compassion and consolation. For this reason God cannot be sheer necessity and power or "impassible compassion," but "must be further grasped as *spirit* with the deeper quality of *freedom*, in order that it should be a concept of God *that is worthy of God and also worthy of us*."[309]

[299] *LProofs*, 66. [300] *LPR* 3. 219–20. [301] *LPR* 3. 124, 143. [302] *PhS* §32.
[303] *LPR* 3. 219. [304] *LPR* 3. 326. [305] *LPR* 3. 324. [306] *LPR* 3. 125.
[307] See Henry A. Wolfson, *The Philosophy of Spinoza* (Cleveland, OH: Meridian Books, 1965), 346. The contradiction between substance metaphysics and divine personhood and love is present in medieval Jewish, Christian, and Muslim theological traditions.
[308] *LPR* 3. 125, 135–7. [309] *LProofs*, 81; emphasis added.

9. THE ACTUALITY OF RECONCILIATION: GOD EXISTING AS COMMUNITY

The cultus raises the issues concerning the presence of reconciliation, eschatology, and the related question of the relation of religious representation to philosophy and the concept. Hegel holds that the dualism inherent in representation (*Vorstellung*) both distorts traditional theology and threatens to undermine the presence and actuality of reconciliation.

> The "now" of the enjoyment of reconciliation dissolves in representation, partly into a beyond [*Jenseits*], an otherworldly heaven, partly into the past, and partly into the future. But spirit is utterly present to itself; it requires a fulfilled present and more than merely confused images. It demands that the content itself [i.e., reconciliation] should be present.[310]

The logical concept is a criticism of the externality and dualism of representation. Representation dissolves the "now" of the enjoyment of reconciliation and evacuates it from a present reality into something that only ought to be. Hegel believes that recognition of the actuality of reconciliation can occur only in the medium of the concept—that is, the medium of thought, not in the medium of representation. Hegel criticizes the dualism and subjectivism of representation because these leave theology with the following alternatives: either an absolute and total presence of reconciliation claimed by religious fanaticism[311] and triumphalism, or the continual deferral and postponement of the reconciliation that "ought to be" (the morality project), or the repudiation of the very idea of reconciliation by secular skepticism and nihilism.[312] Hegel rejects these alternatives: "There is nothing, either in heaven or on earth, either in the spiritual or natural world, that exhibits the abstract 'either/or' as is maintained by the understanding. Everything that is at all, is concrete. Hence it is inwardly distinguished and self-opposed."[313] This is true of the concept, the rational itself and of spirit.

Hegel draws upon the logic of the self-differentiating, self-resolving concept in his treatment of reconciliation. He claims that reconciliation has an explicitly trinitarian structure and foundation:

> The reconciliation in Christ . . . makes no sense if God is not known as the triune God, if it is not recognized that God is, but also is as the other, as self-distinguishing, so that this other is God himself, having implicitly the divine

[310] *LPR* 3. 237.

[311] According to Hegel, fanaticism "would wish to find the whole in every particular and could accomplish this only by destroying the particular, for fanaticism is simply the refusal to admit particular differences" (*PR* §270Z).

[312] Cf. *LPR* 3. 234–5, 337.

[313] *EL* §120Z2.

> nature in it, and that the sublation of this difference, this otherness and the return of love, are the spirit.[314]

There is a further important parallel between the concept of spirit and the concept. While every moment of the concept is itself the whole concept, the third moment, "singularity [*Einzelheit*], the subject, is the concept posited as a totality."[315] Spirit corresponds to the singularity of the concept, its true infinity, its concrete universality. This logical pattern is reflected in Hegel's account of triunity:

> the abstract God, the Father, is the *universal*, what is all-encompassing, what is One. We are now on the level of spirit; the universal here includes everything within itself. The other, the Son, is infinite *particularity* [*Besonderheit*], the realm of appearance; the third, the Spirit, is *singularity* [*Einzelheit*] as such. *But we must be aware that all three are spirit*. In the third we say, God is the Spirit; but the spirit is also "presupposing," *the third is also the first*. It is essential to hold on to this; it is explained by the nature of the logical concept.[316]

The third (that is, Spirit) is also the first. Like the concept, Spirit is an articulated whole or totality. For Hegel, Spirit is not simply one trinitarian person among others, but rather names inclusively the triune God as a whole. Thus Hegel writes:

> God, the actual being that is eternally in and for itself, begets himself as his Son, distinguishes himself from himself—the absolute primal division. . . . The relationship of father and son is drawn from organic life and is used in representational fashion. This natural relationship is only figurative and never wholly corresponds to what should be expressed.
>
> We say that God eternally begets his son, that God distinguishes himself from himself . . . God does this and is utterly present to himself in the other whom he has posited (the form of love). But at the same time we must know very well that *God is himself this entire activity*. God is the beginning . . . but he is likewise simply the *end*, the *totality*, and *it is as totality that God is the Spirit. Merely as the Father, God is not yet the truth* . . . Rather God is both beginning and end; he is his own presupposition . . . he is the eternal process.[317]

Peter Hodgson points out an ambiguity in Hegel's theological trinitarianism: that, on the one hand, God is the *totality* that differentiates itself inwardly in the Father's begetting of the Son—what the tradition called the immanent trinity—and, on the other hand, this entire immanent trinity is identified with a *single trinitarian person* which is abstract—that is, the Kingdom of the Father.[318] This abstract Kingdom of the Father roughly corresponds to the moment of abstract universality in the logical concept. This produces a

[314] *LPR* 3. 327 (1827). [315] *EL* §§160, 163. [316] *LPR* 3. 195.
[317] *LPR* 3. 284 n., amplification from the 1831 Lectures; emphasis added.
[318] *LPR* 3. 362 n. 8.

dissonance, for, on the one hand, this entire inner abstract sphere of the immanent trinity is not a plausible symbolic person; moreover, it corresponds to the abstract universality of the concept, not to the moment of singularity that is the locus of personhood. Calling this immanent trinity a "person," even symbolically, is problematic, because it is abstract, as Hegel concedes when he asserts that, "taken abstractly as father, he is not the true God."[319] On the other hand, the inner dialectic of eternal begetting is re-enacted outwardly in the world (economic trinity), which is the revelation of God as a totality. But Hegel's term for *this* inclusive totality is not "Father" but rather "Spirit."

However, for Hegel "Spirit" signifies not a particular trinitarian person in contrast to others, but their sublation—that is, the triune God as a whole, which includes the traditional distinction between immanent and economic trinities. Hodgson points out that Hegel's concept of absolute spirit is systematically organized around the polyvalent concept of the death of God, understood as the divine history (*Lebenslauf*) re-enacted in the death of Christ:

> The three meanings of the death of Christ—the full presence of both humanity and divinity, the despair that God himself is dead, and the reversal, the putting to death of death and the resurrection into life—these are, as it were, a reenactment of the divine history. "The abstractness of the Father is given up in the Son—this then is death. But the negation of this negation is the unity of Father and Son—love or the spirit" (*LPR* 3. 370.) In other words, it is the abstract God, the supreme being, the Father, who dies in the death of the Son, and who is, as it were, reborn as concrete world-encompassing Spirit. This is the speculative Good Friday.[320]

The death of the Son, the mediator, is also the death of the abstract divine being that is devoid of subjectivity.[321] The death of the abstract God is also the end of substance metaphysics and the formal constraints it imposed on theology, pointing up the necessity for theological reconstruction, and why Hegel is concerned that divine subjectivity not be conceptually undermined or subordinated to an unknown abstract divine essence.[322] But it is also clear that, for Hegel, the death of the God of substance metaphysics is not an abstract negation or simply atheism, but rather a determinate negation that both preserves and elevates the negated terms to a higher level—that is, the abstract God the Father is resurrected together with the Son in the inclusive totality of their love that is absolute spirit.

Although God as absolute spirit is not simply the absolute idea, in his theological trinitarianism Hegel replicates the dialectical development of the concept—from abstract universal through particularity to their reconciliation in singularity. God as spirit is God as totality, God as *universal singularity*, as community. This community itself, wherein God is spirit, is the objective *actuality* of reconciliation. Indeed, Hegel claims not only that the actuality of

[319] *LPR* 3. 364 (1831). [320] Hodgson, Editorial Introduction, in *LPR* 3. 53.
[321] *PhS* §785. [322] Cf. Sect. 2A p. 252; Sect 2B pp. 264–5; Sect. 3 pp. 261–5.

reconciliation is present in the cultus community, but that "the community itself is the *existing Spirit*, the Spirit in its existence [*Existenz*], *God existing as community*."[323]

We have seen that, while the *Logic* does not explicitly decide the ontological status of subjectivity, personhood, or spirit, it does frame a range of possibilities of personhood, conceived in terms of the singularity (*Einzelheit*) of the concept. These possibilities form a continuum, starting from immediate *Einzelheit* and culminating with *Universal Einzelheit*. The former immediate singularity is abstract, a being-for-one-*only*, and is synonymous with evil, whether or not Hegel intends to treat or include a doctrine of the Fall or replace it with a doctrine of natural humanity.[324]

Further, Hegel identifies a christological sense of singularity—namely, that the unity of divine and human nature must appear in just one human being; this unity must appear "as a singular human being set apart."[325] Jesus, who is the incarnate manifestation of the self-emptying God, does not grasp for equality with God but empties himself in servanthood, obediently suffering to the point of death. Hegel's christology is a singularity that is "exclusively for others."[326] In the 1831 Lectures Hegel characterizes the double kenotic process of self-emptying as follows:

> The process is . . . such that immediate singularity is sublated. Just as in the first sphere the seclusion of God came to an end, and God's original immediacy as the abstract universality according to which he is the essence of essences, has been sublated, so here [in the kenosis of Christ] the abstraction of humanity, the immediacy of subsisting singularity, is sublated, and this is brought about by death. But the death of Christ is the death of this death itself, the negation of negation.[327]

The singularity of Jesus, who is "exclusively for others," brings the many single individuals confronting it into the unity of the Spirit, into the community.[328]

This community is a third sense of singularity—namely, the universal singularity of the cultus/community. The cultus is the presence of the divine singularity that is at the same time universal and for others, the community of the Spirit. For Hegel, the presence of divine spirit moves this community beyond morality, moralism, and moralizing judgments, to participation in the presence of God that relativizes all other concerns including morality:

> the issue is not a moral teaching . . . rather what is of interest is an infinite relationship to God, to the present God . . . —finding satisfaction not in morality,

[323] *LPR* 3. 331 (1827); emphasis added.
[324] Hegel drops the doctrine of the Fall in his 1831 Lectures. *LPR* 3. 365 n.
[325] *LPR* 3. 313 (1827).
[326] *LPR* 3. 133. Note that this further differentiation of singularity is most explicitly carried out in the 1821 Manuscript. Karl Barth may have been influenced by Hegel's terminology here; cf. *Church Dogmatics*, III/2.
[327] *LPR* 3. 323–4 n. 199.
[328] *LPR* 3. 133.

> ethics or conscience, but rather in *that than which nothing is greater, the relationship to God himself*. . . . The defining characteristic of this kingdom of God is the *presence of God*, which means that the members of this kingdom are expected to have not only a love for humanity, but also the consciousness that God is love.[329]

In the presence of God the human being as such "possesses infinite value on its own account, being conscious that it is the absolute object of the infinite love of God."[330] In this infinite value all external distinctions are given up:

> distinctions of mastery, power, position, even of gender and wealth. Before God all human beings are equal. This comes to consciousness for the first time here and now in the speculative and negative elements of the infinite anguish of love; *herein lies the possibility and root of truly universal justice and of the actualization of freedom*.[331]

Hegel defines Spirit more precisely as love originating in the infinite anguish of the death of God.[332] This suffering love is not merely one mode of spirit; rather it is spirit itself present in the cultus, the community.

> Spirit is the infinite return into itself, infinite subjectivity, not represented but *actual divinity*, *the presence of God*, not the substantial in-itself of the Father or of the Son and of Christ . . . The spirit is rather what is subjectively present and actual; and it is only through this mediation in the community that it is itself subjectively present as the divestment into the objective intuition of love and its anguish. *This is the Spirit of God, or God as the present, actual spirit, God dwelling in his community*. . . . This is the absolute significance of the spirit, the highest pure consciousness of the absolute idea and of absolute truth.[333]

Spirit's presence to itself is a fulfilled present: "the community itself is the existing spirit, Spirit in its existence, *God existing as community*."[334]

For the above reason it would be a mistake simply to identify Hegel's concept of spirit with the traditional holy spirit, one of the least developed aspects of classical Christian theology, close to being the veneration of an abstraction. Hegel's concept of spirit is no abstraction, but rather the speculative concrete. Hegel expands and deepens the concept of spirit profoundly, identifying it with the community, which in its cultus celebrates the God–man who dies daily and rises daily,[335] and which participates in the love originating

[329] *LPR* 3. 322; emphasis added. Hegel's language echoes Anselm's "that than which nothing greater can be conceived."
[330] *LPR* 1. 352. [331] *LPR* 3. 138; emphasis added.
[332] *LPR* 3. 140: "Love as originating in infinite anguish [of the death of God] is precisely the concept of spirit itself."
[333] *LPR* 3. 140; emphasis added.
[334] *RR* 338; *LPR* 3. 331; emphasis added. [335] *PhS* §784.

in infinite anguish of the death of God.[336] "Everything can be consumed in the infinite anguish of love, but this consuming process itself is nothing else but the inwardly present spirit."[337] "Only spirit itself, which has grasped and envisaged the truth, absolute objectivity, provides the supreme independence."[338]

This is neither the triumphalism of traditional eschatology, where the absolute is sheer overwhelming power and presence without serious opposition,[339] nor a constantly deferred ought, nor a nihilistic celebration of chaos and destruction. In holding fast to the infinite anguish of divine love manifest in the death of God, Hegel deepens but does not repudiate his early quasi-tragic metaphysical vision of love.

Even in the *Early Theological Writings* love is both creative and destructive—that is, love has a tragic aspect. According to Paul Tillich, Hegel follows Luther in distinguishing the alien from the proper work of love. Love's proper work is the reconciliation and reunion of the estranged. The tragic aspect of love that Tillich finds implicit in Luther's distinction is that love must destroy what opposes love.[340] Destruction is the alien or strange work of love, which includes suffering—part of the price that must be paid for reunion of the estranged.[341] To deny this strange work of love—its tragic aspect—would reduce love to mere sentimentalism and powerless subjectivism by depriving love of the power to accomplish its proper work. Moreover, the destruction of what opposes the reconciling aim of love does not contradict or exclude the proper work of love. To be sure, the alien work of love is negative; however, this is not abstract negation but rather determinate negation. As such it "holds fast to what is positive in its negative."[342] As Hegel observes, to say "'love has conquered' does not mean the same as 'duty has conquered,' i.e., subdued its enemies; it means that love has overcome enmity, hostility."[343] The affirmative aim of love, its proper work, is overcoming estrangement and reuniting those who were estranged. The alien work of love destroys what is against love—that is, estrangement and separation—but love in its own or proper work saves through forgiveness those who are estranged and separated.[344]

Hegel famously writes, "the sinner is more than a sin existent, a trespass possessed of personhood, he is a human being . . . "[345] This distinction between sin and sinner—the former the object of love's strange work of destruction of

[336] *LPR* 3. 140. [337] *LPR* 3. 241. [338] *LPR* 3. 136.

[339] See Hegel, *Natural Law*, trans. T. M. Knox (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1975).

[340] See Williams, *Tragedy, Recognition, and the Death of God*, ch. 12; see also *LPJ* 49–50. Tillich observes that Luther himself did not fully appreciate the tragic aspect of love's alien work.

[341] See *LPJ* 49 ff. Tillich discusses Luther's term the "alien work of love," and identifies it as love's tragic aspect, the price that must be paid for the reunion of the separated (p. 51). Hegel also believes that divine love has a tragic aspect; cf. his account of the death of God (e.g., *LPR* 3. 125).

[342] *SL* 54, 834. [343] *ETW* 247. [344] *LPJ* 114. [345] *ETW* 238.

what makes reconciliation impossible, the latter the object of love's proper work of forgiveness of the estranged—allows Hegel to reconcile the negative and the affirmative aspects of love, its alien and proper work, its destruction and creativity. "In contrast with . . . reversion to obedience, reconciliation in love is a liberation; in contrast with the re-recognition of lordship and mastery, love is the cancellation of lordship in the restoration of the living bond, of that spirit of love and mutual faith which, considered in relation to lordship, is the highest freedom."[346]

In Hegel's mature logic and system, the spirit of love, and the distinction between its strange (negative) and proper work (affirmative), is reflected in the distinction between abstract and determinate negation. Abstract negation is totally destructive; it is the empty negative or the nothing that is taken to be the usual result of dialectic.[347] The alien work of love is not abstract negation, but rather determinate negation. Determinate negation both negates and preserves; what appears to be self-contradictory is not necessarily a nullity but can be affirmative—that is, reconciled. Determinate negation holds "fast to the positive in its negative, in its . . . result; this is the most important feature in rational cognition."[348] Determinate negation can have an affirmative aspect, for

> what is self-contradictory does not resolve itself into a nullity, into abstract nothingness, but essentially only into the negation of its *particular* content, in other words, that such a negation is . . . the negation of a specific subject matter which resolves itself and consequently is a specific negation, and therefore the result essentially contains that from which it results . . . Because the result, the negation, is a *specific* negation, it has a *content*. It is a fresh concept but higher and richer than its predecessor; for it is richer by the negation . . . of the latter, therefore contains it, but also something more, for *it is the unity of itself and its opposite*.[349]

In Hegel's view, dialectical thinking, like love, holds fast to the positive in its negative, and for this reason dialectical negations can culminate in transformative, affirmative results. However, while this affirmative result cannot be understood apart from that from which it resulted, yet it is irreducible to its origin because it is higher and richer than its predecessor; for by negating its predecessor it includes it and has become enriched by it. Thus, in the result, the beginning has undergone negation, enrichment, and self-transformation; now it is something more—namely, the unity of itself and its opposite.

The possibility of affirmative dialectical mediation opens the way to the speculative concrete, freedom, and community.[350] Conversely, the love manifest

[346] *ETW* 241.
[347] *SL* 54, 834. Hegel sees abstract negation in the destructive Terror of the French Revolution. *PR* §5.
[348] *SL* 834. [349] *SL* 54; emphasis added.
[350] *EL* §82. See discussion of the speculative concrete and mysticism in Sect. 2B.

in the infinite anguish of the death of God, despite its tragic aspect, continues to be the reconciling, community-forming spirit it was in the *Early Theological Writings*: The spirit of love "seeks out differences and devises unifications *ad infinitum*."[351] This statement contains the germ, but only the germ, of what Hegel grasped in his affirmative appreciation of Christianity as a religion of love, forgiveness, reconciliation, and universal freedom, which he expressed in the theology of God existing as spirit in its community.

Accordingly, we must conclude that, on the one hand, there is a close connection between Hegel's concept of divine personhood and his concept of spirit. In the *Logic*, Hegel speaks of the personhood of the absolute idea thus:

> The highest, most concentrated point is the pure personhood which, solely through the absolute dialectic which is its nature, no less embraces and holds everything within itself, because it makes itself the supremely free—the simplicity which is the first immediacy and universality.[352]

However, the pure personhood of the *Logic*, as the first immediacy and universality, is not yet specified, much less expanded to totality. It is a general structure and consciousness of method not yet specified ontologically—that is, as existing for itself, or as "I," or as developed into its totality as free spirit, or as love that reunites the estranged.[353]

On the other hand, on the basis of our investigation we must conclude that, for Hegel, not all possible modes of singularity and personhood are *ipso facto* spirit. He expressly rules out immediate singularity, which, as being-for-one-*only*, is refusal of mediation, withdrawal from community or action in opposition to community and thus evil. Rather we must conclude that spirit—including absolute spirit—sublates and therefore embodies in itself that personhood that is mediated by other and enlarged to *universal singularity* or totality. With this conclusion we come into proximity to K. L. Michelet when he wrote:

> The authentic doctrine of Hegel concerning the personhood of God is not that God is a person next to or among other persons; just as little is it that God is merely universal substance. God is the eternal movement of the universal continuously constituting itself as subject, which first comes to objectivity and authentic existence only in the subject (*das Subjekt*), and thus suspends the subject in its abstract [isolated] being-for-self [*Fürsichsein*]. Therefore according to Hegel God is not a [single] person, *but rather personhood itself* [*die Persönlichkeit selbst*], *the only authentic personhood*, in contrast to which the subject which wills to be a particular person in opposition to the divine substance is evil.[354]

[351] *ETW* 307. [352] *SL* 841.

[353] *EL* §159. Recall that Hegel's system consists of both *Logic* and *Realphilosophie*—the latter includes both nature and spirit.

[354] Karl Ludwig Michelet, *Geschichte der letzten Systeme der Philosophie in Deutschland von Kant Bis Hegel* (2 vols; Berlin: Duncker und Humblot, 1837–8), 2. 646–8.

According to Michelet, personhood is virtually synonymous with universal singularity. If God is the universal continuously constituting itself as subject which suspends the finite subject in its nullity and abstract being-for-self and elevates it into community with God, then Michelet is not wrong to assert that God, while not a person, is rather the authentic personhood itself. However, it is difficult to see much difference between "the authentic personhood itself" as mediated universal singularity, and God as absolute spirit.[355]

Nevertheless, there is a difference, and it is the difference that mediation makes. For Hegel the terms are not fully convertible. Personhood, like unity and being-for-self, retains an abstractness that must be overcome in a further mediation—something like mutual recognition—and Spirit is just this overcoming and extension of personhood to universality, i.e., community. Hegel points out the abstract unity of personhood when he notes that being a person is the highest intensity of being-for-self (*Fürsichsein*). Personhood expresses the fact that the antithesis between the one and the other is to be taken as absolute.[356] This would make any resolution of the trinitarian distinctions impossible; yet, when pushed to its extreme, personhood sublates itself, and it is just this resolution that is expressed in the assertion that God is one. It is precisely in the divine unity that personhood is *both posited and resolved*. But the resolution of personhood is spirit, for all three are spirit.[357]

He makes a related point when he writes:

> as far as personhood is concerned, it is the character of the person, the subject, to surrender its isolation and separateness. Ethical life, love, means precisely the giving up of particularity, of *particular* personhood, and *its extension to universality* . . . In friendship and love I give up my abstract personhood and thereby win it back as concrete. The truth of personhood is found precisely in winning it back through this immersion . . . in the other.[358]

This passage clarifies Hegel's position concerning the relation between personhood and spirit. The truth of personhood is located in the recognitive return to self out of otherness, mediated by the other. That is, *the truth of personhood is the mediation that spirit is*. We know from Hegel's account of

[355] In support of this view, Michelet cites F. C. Baur: "If God is truly conceived as spirit, then either God as spirit is immediately also the same as personhood, or it is difficult to see what the concept of personhood is supposed to add to the concept of God . . . " (Ferdinand Christian Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis* (Tübingen: Osiander, 1835), 706. Baur is correct when he maintains that God as spirit is the same as personhood, but this is true only from the perspective of spirit as the consummation of personhood in community. Personhood consummated in community, i.e., spirit, is surely one of Hegel's fundamental ideas. If this is true, then the terms, while related, are not fully convertible. The logic of Hegel's position implies that personhood retains an abstractness (i.e., abstract being-for-self, or *Fürsichsein*) that must be overcome in a process of mediation something like mutual recognition. The meaning of personhood in the sense of universal singularity, like universal self-consciousness in *E.* §436 that is the universal form of both social consciousness and individual consciousness, is indistinguishable from spirit.

[356] *LPR* 3. 193–4. [357] *LPR* 3. 194–5. [358] *LPR* 3. 285–6.

incarnation that God is the supreme exemplification of a love that gives up abstract personhood and transcendence, and wins personhood back as concrete through immersion in other (that is, through death and resurrection).[359] Thus, in Hegel's view, the principle that the truth of personhood is spirit is true of God. The truth of personhood is mediated by its other and returned to itself from the other, enriched by the other. This means that "what is absolutely concrete is the *spirit*."[360] Again, "the highest intensity of the subject in the ideality of all concrete determinations, and of the *highest antitheses*, is *spirit*."[361] Thus, Triune Absolute Spirit sublates the truth of personhood, and is the central, inclusive concept of Hegel's philosophy of religion.

Nevertheless, it is equally clear that, in the concept of spirit, personhood is not left behind, but rather sublated. Spirit is universal singularity that includes both the individual and social forms of personhood. While nature, life, and personhood are subordinate elements of the concept of God, Hegel insists that God "must be further grasped as *spirit* with the deeper quality of *freedom*, in order that it should be a concept of God that is *worthy of God* and also *worthy* of *us*."[362] At the level of absolute Spirit, nothing of personhood in its extended sense of mediated universal singularity is lost. For Spirit "not only does not lose anything or leave anything behind, but carries along with it all it has gained, and inwardly enriches and consolidates itself."[363] Spirit in Hegel's sense is no abstraction or "ghost," but rather the speculative concrete, theological trinitarianism, the triune God as a whole:

> Love as originating in infinite anguish is precisely the concept of spirit itself. It becomes objective in Christ as the focal point of faith at an infinite distance and sublimity, but at the same time in an infinite nearness that peculiarly belongs to the individual subject. Humanity, death, infinite limitation are taken up into the divine idea. But it is not for the individual . . . but rather for all individuals, and *as thus actual in their subjectivity*, that the divine idea is spirit—the Holy Spirit. . . . Spirit is the infinite return into itself, infinite subjectivity, not represented but *actual* divinity, the *presence* of God. . . . . his is the Spirit of God, or God as the *present, actual spirit*, God dwelling in his community. . . . .

[359] *LPR* 3. 310–16; cf. 316 n 175; cf.: "In Hindu pantheism a countless number of incarnations occur; but there subjectivity, the human being, is only an accidental form in God. It is only a mask that substance adopts and exchanges in contingent fashion. As *spirit*, on the other hand, *God contains the moment of subjectivity and uniqueness in himself*" (*LPR* 3. 315 n.). See also *LPR* 2. 660 n. W2: "the externalization of God in human shape is only one side of the divine life; for this externalization is taken back again into the One, who thus for the first time is present *as spirit* for thought and for the community; the single, actually existing human is sublated and posited in God as a moment, as one of the persons of God. In this way, humanity, as *this* human being, is for the first time truly within God, the appearance of the divine is thus absolute, and *its element is spirit itself*" (emphasis added).

[360] *EL* §164; emphasis added.

[361] *LProof*s, 80; emphasis added.

[362] *LProofs*, 81; emphasis added.

[363] *SL* 840.

> Accordingly in this profound sense the Christian religion is the religion of spirit, though not in the manifold, trivial senses of being a spiritual religion, one venerating and regarding abstraction as substance and essence. On the contrary, the Christian religion is the *unification of the infinite opposition,* the one and only *genuine speculative enjoyment of the nature of God or of spirit.* This is its content and its vision, and it is there for the ordinary, uneducated consciousness. . . . All persons are called to blessedness.[364]

[364] *LPR* 3. 140 (1821); emphasis added.

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